

Demetrio / Fernando / Fialista

The
**SOUL
BOOK**

Roberto B. Felce, Artist

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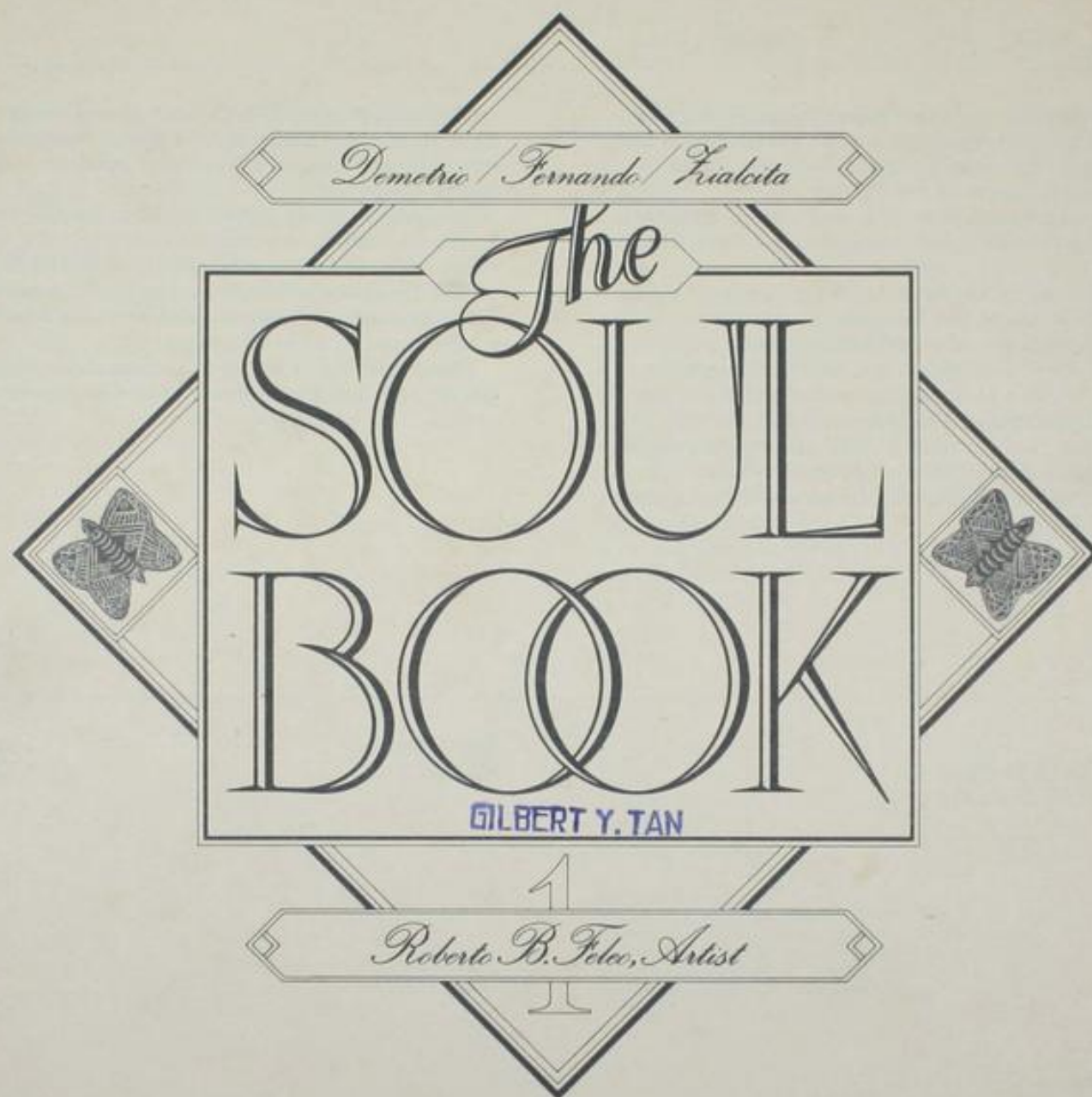
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GILBERT Y. TAN

T H E P H I L I P P I N E R E A D E R



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Gods in a High-Tech Age



He rode out of the clouds, glorious like the sun, brandishing a sword that scattered the enemy. One by one he smote those fearful creatures from another world: the two-headed giant, the serpent whose batlike wings overshadowed the sun, and the sorcerer with the face of Death.

Thanks to modern technology, miracles in another age are banalities in ours. Winged vessels soar effortlessly into the blue and beyond; fish-shaped vessels plumb deep into the water beyond the reach of light. In a flash we can send our faces and voices to the other side of the globe. Despite these wonders, man continues to conceive of beings greater than himself. On TV, these superhumans battle each other with lasers and nuclear missiles. They employ robots — if they are not one themselves. The gods are still with us.

The admired says something about the admirer. Our modern superheroes are forever tinkering with the latest gadgets. Many a battle on Planet Delta has been lost because of systems failure. Far different were

the superheroes of the awit and korido that Filipinos chanted a century ago. Then when people's attention was riveted on salvation in the next world, winning the war against the infidel mattered more than up-to-date equipment. And what were our superheroes like at an even earlier time, before the coming of Islam and Christianity? Such a journey should be undertaken, for our ancestral gods may reveal to us fears, hopes, and longings as a people that we have swept aside.

We need a popular introduction to the religious beliefs of Filipinos before the advent of Islam and Christianity. For the educated minority, Greek and Roman mythology is more familiar than our own. They can summon Apollo and Aphrodite or mentally wander around Olympus; but they are puzzled by Bagan and the seven levels of the Bukidnon sky-world. A vast area of our collective self, a self that is the product of generations of reflection upon life's meaning, is thus submerged in darkness. In fact the ridges and valleys of this unexplored self continue to underlie our own view of the world, "modern" though we are. A rediscovery of our myths unlocks this hidden continent.

Many books and articles have been written on aspects of the Filipino's religious beliefs and practices before the advent of the monotheistic religions. But they have not been pooled together into one synthesis. Nor are they accessible to a public that seeks a general rather than specialized information. Ideally a popular synthesis brings together traits associated with local spirits, the geography of the afterworld, the structure of the cosmos, important rituals, religious specialists, and sacred objects. To en flesh this general portrait, such an introduction should also offer samples of stories related by Filipinos about humans and deities. These are many and diverse.

A popular introduction and synthesis is what this book aims to be. Accounts by early Christian missionaries; data from ethnographies of present-day animist Filipinos; myths, legends, and folktales; and archaeological data have been assembled together to reconstruct the profile of this non-Islamic and non-Christian vision of the world. The reader, however, may wonder why so much attention has been given to minority groups such as the Bontoc and the Bukidnon. They seem so exotic — so far removed from the worries of modern urbanites. Our answer is that, by escaping the influence of these religions until recently, these peoples have retained much of our ancestors' way of life. However, folklore from Christian and Islamic Filipinos has also been included when they obviously fit in with the rest of the picture. Many Christian and Moslem Filipinos continue to hold beliefs from the earlier indigenous tradition.

The bloodiness of some of the beliefs and practices will no doubt surprise some readers. How seemingly different, it seems, are the Greek and Roman myths and European fairy tales. They seem so clean! But are they really? In fact many of them have been sanitized for popular consumption. Allusions to human sacrifice, which figured in Roman ritual up till the first century before Christ, are often glossed over or downplayed. The resulting pretty picture distorts the past and prevents understanding. The same complaint can be made of pictures drawn of early Philippine religion in the popular press.

This is a pity, for early Philippine religion is worth studying in itself. Features of its mythic apparatus should delight a wide range of readers: a giant crab that controls the searides, flying boats that swim effortlessly to the sky, or spirits that assume insect form. If, after reading this book, the spirit moves the reader to compose a poem on the sky-world, or visit a sacred cave, or read a specialized book on legends, or simply exult in the breadth and depth of our myths, the book will have fulfilled its purpose.

THE POWER

R O U R C E S



Who's the Greatest?



All over the world are stories of a god who dwells in the topmost layer of the sky. He is believed to have created the world and afterwards to have retired to his celestial abode. Often he is depicted as rarely intervening in the affairs of mortals. Man must pray to other deities and spirits for help. His names in the Philippines are many, but he is one. He is usually pictured as compassionate and concerned towards man, his creature, more so in fact than the minor gods and goddesses below him.

Bathala

The Tagalogs called their supreme god Bathala Maykapal or Lumikha (The Creator).

An enormous being, he could not straighten up due to the lowness of the sky. And the sun burned brightly near him. One day, Bathala got a bolo and pierced one of the sun's eyes so that it could generate just enough heat to sustain life. At last Bathala was able to straighten up and with his hands pushed the cooler sky to its present level.

Bathala is also known as the grand conservator of the universe, the caretaker of things from whom all providence comes, hence the beautiful word "*bahala*" or "*mabahala*" meaning "to care." From this evolved the Filipino attitude of "*bahala na*" or "Let Bathala take care of it" which gives a person tremendous courage in the face of danger (Jocano 1969). The risk-taking can assume a heroic form such as when defenceless civilians blocked tanks at EDSA or it could be recklessness such as driving down a mountain road on faulty brakes.

Laon

The Bisayan name for the creator god is Laon, which denotes antiquity. According to an Occidental Negros myth, the world was without human beings and animals except for a bird, Manaul, who was the pet of Laon. The bird was allowed to wander freely — scour the wilderness or dive to the bottom of the sea — on the one cruel condition that it would not soil its feathers.

Bathala, the high god of creation of the early Filipinos, pierced one of the sun's eyes with his bolo.

As fate would have it, Manual was caught in the thorny stem of a rattan tree. Try as it would, the bird could not get free and most of its colorful feathers were torn.

The god Laon was furious. "Because of your misbehavior, I will make your life miserable," Laon said. "Henceforth other creatures will molest and frighten you. Out of your eggs will come living beings more powerful than you."

And indeed the small fallen feathers of Manual were transformed into flying birds and insects and from the large plumes came creeping animals. Mute with fright and despair, Manual went to the hollow of the rattan tree and beheld the two strange forms of a man and a woman. Upon seeing them the bird died in an agony of despair. And man, woman and all other creatures took Manual's place as the first inhabitants of earth.

Thus did a bird become the agent of the indirect creation of man by Laon (Ramos undated).

Another creator god whose name, like Laon, means old is Gugurang of the Bikols.



Manama

The highest god of the Manuvu, a people noted for their warrior spirit, lived in the highest realm of the sky. He did not like to live alone so he created the sky, the earth and the living creatures.

Out of the dirt of his fingernails, Manama moulded the earth; he made it little by little until it was big and round. But all it had were dry rocks. Nothing would grow in it.

Manama looked enviously at the world of his neighbor, the evil god, Oggasi, where everything was lush and green. Manama sent his bird, the *limokon*, to steal a particle of the evil god's fertile soil.

This the good god mixed with his own soil till it became large. He created mountains and made rivers and seas so that the plants would grow.

Among the first trees that grew were the *lauan* tree and the rattan. To Manama it was not yet good to see so he created the animals in the forest and the fish in the sea. Then he thought of creating man as someone had to take care of the trees and the animals.

It took Manama six days to create the world and vault it with the sky. When he had finished creating, he slept. Exhausted by such work, he is believed to be sleeping still (Manuel 1977).

Kabuniyan

The creator god, Kabuniyan, is found in all regions of the Cordillera except Apayao which is located at its northernmost end. Especially in the southern part of the mountain range, from Bontok to the Baguio region Kabuniyan is the supreme teacher who taught

man many things: fire-making, rice-cultivation, and marriage rituals. He is a warrior with a spear "as big as a tree" and an axe "as large as the end roof of a house." He is therefore the patron of head-hunters (de Raedt 1964).

"Kabuniyan" has many meanings in the Cordillera. Aside from being the name of this sky god, it is applied to all culture heroes, including Lumawig. It signifies ultimate power and can also refer to the lowest level of the skyworld — the sky that can be seen everyday.

The peaceful and industrious Kankanai say *itunin sang kabunayen*, "Thank you, Kabuniyan," when something good has happened.

The Better Half

As presented so far, the high deity appears to be wholly male. But this is not always the case. The early 17th century Jesuit missionary, Francisco Ignacio Alcina, who wrote exhaustively on the Warays of Eastern Bisayas, claims that the high deity had two names and two aspects. As "Malaon" or "the Ancient One," the deity was conceived of as a mild and more understanding woman. However, as "Makapatag" or "the Leveller," the deity was an austere and fearful male (Himes 1964). Among some groups in Mindanao, there are in fact two creator deities, one male and one female. In case of disagreement, the wife's judgment prevails. Thus the Bagobos of Davao say that a god created the first man and woman out of corn meal but forgot to put joints in their bodies. Moreover, they were covered with scales and had eyes, ears, and noses that were too small. His goddess consort had to intervene to re-do their faces. Also she confined the scales to the tips of their fingers and toes, and created joints so they could move (Ramos 1977). Her woman's common sense averted a catastrophe.

BILAN

MELU, THE CLEANLY CREATOR

In the very beginning there lived a being so large that he could not be compared with any known thing. His name was Melu, and when he sat on the clouds, which were his home, he occupied all the space above. His teeth were pure gold, and because he was very cleanly and continually rubbed himself with his hands, his skin became pure white. The dead skin which he rubbed off his body was placed on one side in a pile, and by and by this pile became so large that he was annoyed and set himself to consider what he could do with it.

Finally Melu decided to make the earth; so he worked very hard in putting the dead skin into shape, and when it was finished he was so pleased with it that he determined to make two beings like himself, though smaller, to live on it.

Taking the remnants of the material left after making the earth he fashioned two men, but just as they were all finished except for their noses, Tau Tana from below the earth appeared and wanted to help him.

Melu did not wish any assistance, and a great argument ensued. Tau Tana finally won his point

*Melu was a cleanly
being who continually
rubbed himself till his
skin grew white.*



and made the noses which he placed on the people upside down. When all was finished, Melu and Tau Tana whipped the forms until they moved. Then Melu went to his home above the clouds, and Tau Tana returned to his place below the earth.

All went well until one day a great rain came, and the people on earth nearly drowned from the water which ran off their heads into their noses. Melu, from his place on the clouds, saw their danger, and he came quickly to earth and saved

their lives by turning their noses the other side up.

The people were very grateful to him, and promised to do anything he should ask of them. Before he left for the sky, they told him that they were very unhappy living on the great earth all alone, so he told them to save all the hair from their heads and the dry skin from their bodies and the next time he came he would make them some companions. And in this way there came to be a great many people on the earth.

— MABEL COOK COLE (1916)

Anitos, Diwatas and the One True God

"In the island of Mindanao between La Canela and the river (Rio Grande), a great promontory projects from a rugged and steep coast; always at these points there is a heavy sea, making it difficult and dangerous to double them. When passing by this headland, the natives, as it was so steep, offered their arrows, discharging them with such force that they penetrated the rock itself. This they did as a sacrifice, that a safe passage might be accorded them. I saw with my own eyes that although the Spaniards, in hatred of so accursed a superstition, had set a great many of these arrows on fire and burned them, those still remaining and those recently planted in the rock numbered, in less than a year, more than four thousand arrows . . ."

*Pedro Chirino, S.J.,
Manila, 1604*



Early Filipinos, like many still today, believed that not only man but all entities, animate or inanimate, have a life force or "soul." These spirits were called *anitos*. Some of these entities were propitiated, for they were powerful humanlike presences that could either harm or help man.

There were two types of *anitos*: the nature spirits and the spirits of dead ancestors.

The major *anitos* dwelled in the layers of the sky; the lesser *anitos* assisting them lived with humans on earth or in the underworld. These spirit beings affected or controlled events in the material world by communicating with humans and receiving pleasure or displeasure from human actions (Delbeke 1928).

Filipinos revered the moon, the stars, the rainbow, the rivers, the seas, the rocks, the trees, and animals. After all, seemingly possessed by spirits, trees did moan when the wind passed through. Seas and rivers appeared to change moods from quiet to sadness to wrath — much like human beings. Some of these beings were regarded as generally beneficial; thus the heavenly bodies gave warmth and coolness needed for life. Not so the other creatures: lightning could burn a tree; crocodiles and crows could eat humans, whether living or dead. Beneficial or not, these vague but powerful presences had to be propitiated with offerings.



Also revered were the spirits of ancestors like recently deceased parents. They gave help in childbirth, housebuilding, and healing; but they could also cause their descendants illness, when displeased. Particularly invoked was the chief who, after death, was believed to grow stronger and better able to defend his people.

The line dividing the two types of *anito*, ancestral and non-ancestral, was a thin one. As the identity of ancestors blurred, the farther away in time they receded, they merged with the surrounding environment, as spirits of the gardens, fields, and trees. Who they were had since been forgotten; but their memory had to be acknowledged either by offering gifts or by avoiding the place to leave them in peace. When ignored, they brought harm. The headland revered by 17th century Mindanao residents may have been a place where many had met an accident, while navigating the waters. Hence offerings were made to both the nameless victims and to the dreadful spirit that may have been the cause in the first place.



The Difference

Anitos are found among all Filipino groups from Mindanao to Batanes. In the Bisayas and Mindanao they are called *diwatas*. There is an interesting reason for this. Those places were closer geographically to the Hindu-Buddhist empires of Indonesia. True, the Philippines was not incorporated into those empires. But trade took place with those empires; and refugees seeking haven from internal conflicts may have come to what were then frontier islands (Casino 1982). In intermediate places between Luzon and the Bisayas, such as in Camarines of the Bikol Region, these beings were interchangeably called *anito* and *diwata*. The word *diwata* (or *dewata*, *devata*, *divata* or *diuata*, as some groups call them), is of Sanskrit origin and means "divinity." The Javanese have spirits called *dewata* or *djuwata*; the Dyaks of Borneo refer to their spirits as *djewata* or *djebata*; and the people of the Celebes speak of their titular angels as *rewata* or *dewata*.

Deities are immortal,
can change form,
become invisible,
transport themselves
through space, cure
illness, recover a lost
soul.

What They Look Like

Among the Manuvu, the *diwatas* (or *anitos*) have bodies with a covering like fingernails, smooth and shiny, with skin only on their joints. Bagobo *diwatas* exist blissfully without ever experiencing hunger, for their stomachs have been snipped off and their favorite food, the betel nut, supplies energy. They wear fine and shining clothes, live in houses on stilts, ride on horses, and go sailing in boats — just like the living Bagobos.

Diwatas are believed by the Manobos of Eastern Mindanao to have once led a human existence in Manobo land. But they succeeded in building a stone structure in the sky and thus were transformed into deities of the first order. Manobo *diwata* are thought to

have brass intestines and capable of drawing up a house into their ethereal abode with a chain (Garvan 1931).

These fabulous beings are generally referred to as "spirits." But, Filipino scholars prefer to merely call them "invisibles." "Spirit," in the Western Christian sense, refers to a being without a body, whereas Filipino *anitos* and *divatas* are always thought of as possessing a bodylike form, whether of humans or animals (Magannon 1972). However, since using the term "invisibles" seems a bit odd, we shall continue using the term "spirits" though in a non-Western sense.

Spirits are male or female. Like you and me, they walk, talk, wear clothes, have haircuts, and can even be wetted if a careless boy pisses just anywhere. Environmental deities, according to the Tagbanuwas of the thickly forested island of Palawan, wear bark cloth from trees, while skyworld deities, both male and female, wear wrap-around skirts. In addition women wear jackets, men turbans. The deities of the skyworld smell very sweet and if anyone but a *babaylan* smells them he/she will fall ill (Fox 1982). *Divatas* are "fair as the moon" (Garvan 1931), and "brow-less" (Unabia 1986).

They live in houses, own property, have spouses, work, play, and can feel lonely. Since they need material things, they are not over and above the material world. They just happen to be unseen. Though not always. Sometimes they become visible in the form of unusual beings. A stranger, who is either extremely dark or extremely light, and therefore unfamiliar to the locals, might be regarded as a spirit. So would an odd-looking animal.

The Latin word for spirit is *anima*. Hence this type of religion has been called "animism," for it finds spirits in even non-human beings. However, since the term has recently been criticized for trying to encompass a variety of religious traditions all over the world, we shall not use it. Instead we shall speak of "early Philippine religion" or "indigenous tradition."

Spirits of ancestors gave help in house-building, childbirth, healing. They became spirits of gardens, fields and trees.

Thousands, Even if They Cannot Stand on the Head of a Pin

How many *anitos* and *divatas* are there?

Their number is legion, considering that every dead relative, perceived as having any kind of distinction, of every single individual in a community can become a deity. Roy F. Barton (1946) calculates at 1,500 the number of deities the Ifugaos alone invoke, and believes that there are many more beings created. In turn, each ethnic group has its own pantheon.

Originally, Filipinos, like other peoples elsewhere, subsisted entirely on gathering tubers, nuts, seeds, and vegetables for their food. On occasion they hunted. The spirits they revered then were only those relevant to their needs: the spirits of the wild plants, of the hunting dog, of the spear, of the boar, or of the mountain where the chase took



place. If the band had enemies, then an additional spirit was invoked as protector. With the coming of agriculture and a more settled way of life, new skills emerged. Farming, pottery, weaving, and carpentry were some of the many new activities that called for guidance and protection. In each of these activities, a plurality of spirits was needed. For instance, because of farming, people supposed that the earth, the rain, the sun, the seeds, the farm tools, and even the act of planting and harvesting had spirits that could be prayed to. Even a house could have many spirits: one or several for the stairs, the door, the posts, and the hearth. As property became increasingly important, ancestors became spirits that could be prayed to for guidance. Among swiddeners or *kaingin* farmers in the Cordillera, where land was, strictly speaking, not owned, ancestral spirits were dreadful presences responsible for illness and death. However, among wet-rice cultivators, where land could be bought, inherited or sold, it became important to prove one's relatedness to the original owners. Ancestral spirits became beneficent beings who protected and helped their descendants (De Raedt 1964). A human being therefore could never be alone in his house even if the rest of the family was outdoors. Contact with other groups sometimes brought in new spirits if these were proven to be powerful.



Not all these spirits had a proper name. People merely knew and acknowledged their presence. However, among the Ifugaos, who had a developed priesthood, many spirits did have names and more individual delineation. Thus the figure of 1,500 cited by Barton.

Belief in an environment teeming with spirits survives in some form among rural Tagalogs. In Nueva Ecija, children are called into the house after the Angelus at dusk lest they collide with the many spirits walking about — presumably to take in the air. Since the 14th century, new and foreign religious traditions have entered the islands with a different conception of the divine.

The deities of the skyworld are a mirror image of the humans on earth.

Deva and Dios

Monotheism is the belief that there is only one supreme deity. There may be other spirits but they are all direct creations of this deity. Whatever power they have comes from him. He cannot be challenged without risking punishment. The sky-god of the various Philippine groups dwelt above the rest in the highest layer of the sky. Though the sky-god may have been all-powerful originally, his power seems to have become limited. Of more concern to Filipinos were the minor *anitos* and *diwatas*, ancestral or otherwise, whom they could propitiate with frequent offerings. Such minor spirits acted without regard for what the Lord of the Upper Sky wanted.



It is commonplace among social scientists to draw a connection between the way a society is organized and its image of divinity. They say that monotheism emerges only when a society has become organized and controlled by a single, paramount ruler. This happens in a state. Then it becomes easier for men to conceive of a single Supreme Being who, without question, dominates the rest. Sixteenth century Luzon and the Bisayas, however, were extremely decentralized. Each community, each *baranggay*, no matter how small, was independent of the rest. Within, so limited was the power of the *datu*, the leader, that disputants who disagreed with the *datu's* decision could appeal their case to a *datu* in another barangay or even to a non-*datu* (Scott 1982). In such a context, it was difficult to conceive of a Lord of the Upper Sky as all-powerful. The trend towards monotheism was probably strongest in those areas where strong chiefs were emerging and permanently subduing other chiefs.

As history would have it, however, two aggressive monotheistic religions intervened: Islam in the South, followed by Christianity in the Center and the North. The two religions pushed the notion that there was only one Supreme Being and all other beings were his creatures. This Supreme Being also had his court consisting of angels and saints who interceded for humans, as well as enforced his will. In Moslem areas, the Angel Gabriel probably took over the control of the winds from the wind god. Among Christian converts, St. Isidore the Farmer (San Isidro Labrador), may have replaced Idianale, deity of the ricefields. Bathala, wifeless and powerful but with no ambivalent qualities, lent his name to the new god, the Christian God. The other term for the new god was, of course, the Spanish *Dios*. But *divata* and *Dios* were, in fact, distant kin. The Latin *Deus*, from where *Dios* came, and the Greek *Theos* were related to the Sanskrit *Deva*, meaning God, for they were all members of the Indo-European family of languages. Among Filipino Moslems, the Arabic "*Allah*" took over completely.



The Process of God-Making



Lumawig, the supreme deity of Bontok religion, must have been an actual human being who lived on the crest of the Cordillera and made such a mark for himself that he is remembered as an immortal. Bontok is justly renowned for extensive rice terraces which, unlike those of Ifugao, are faced with gleaming, white stone. Ordinary residents, who claim descent from Lumawig, carry his name as a surname. The foundation stones of his house are said to still stand (de Raedt 1964). And so likewise his taro fields which, irrigated by an eternal spring, yields taro that does not need replanting (Llanes 1957). Over a century ago in 1843, Sinibaldo de Mas wrote of a mountain cemetery of living stone that he had visited in the Cordillera (de los Reyes 1909). On the highest peak was a hole that people claimed was the tomb of Kabuniyan, their god. Once upon a time, he too must have been no more than a famous warrior.

The gods, thought Euhemerus, a Greek philosopher of the fourth century B.C., were historical persons, admired in their community for their wisdom, physical prowess, and other achievements. After their death, the folk continued to so revere their memory and talk about their extraordinary qualities and deeds that they finally beheld them as superhumans. In our own century, Rizal has become a god for some of our countrymen.

Euhemerism was an early manifestation of a recurring tendency to explain religion as a projection of man's capabilities on a wide, cosmic screen. This tendency, which can be called the naturalistic approach, has become increasingly dominant since the 19th century. A modern version holds that man, seeing himself helpless before thunder, storms, droughts, earthquakes, and other natural forces, posited powerful beings who controlled these forces and could be prayed to. With the advent of more complex forms of social organization, like kingdoms ruled by mighty and often capricious rulers, man



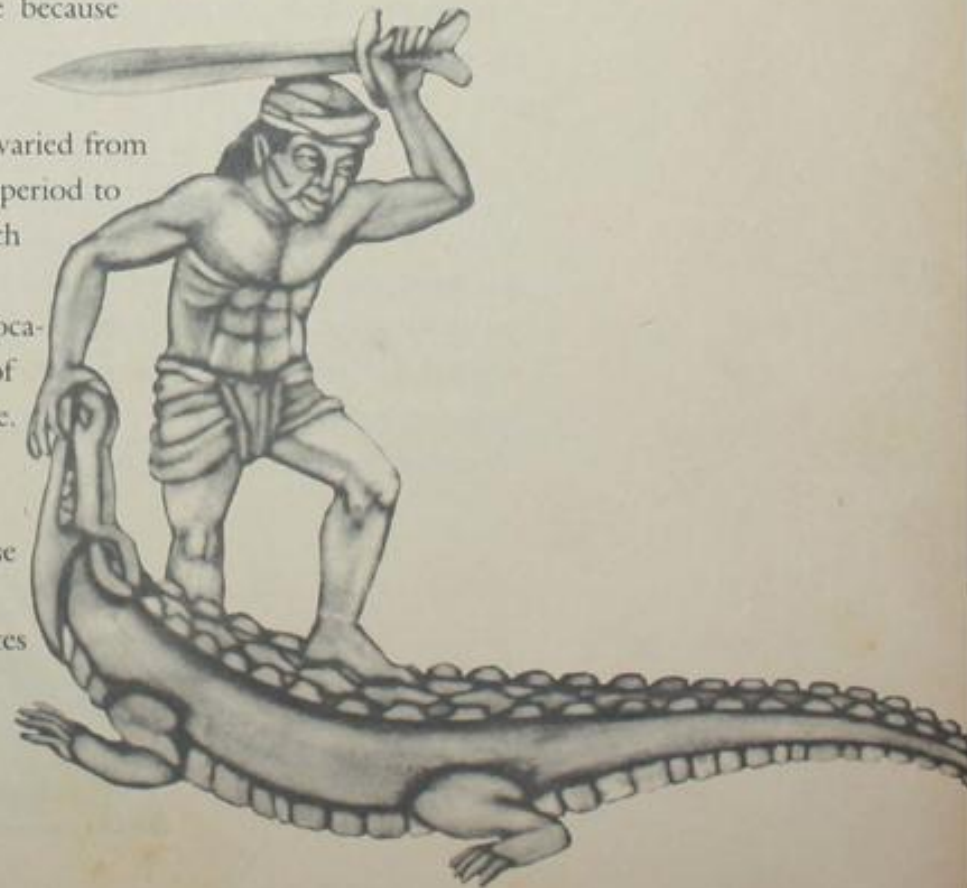
experienced renewed helplessness. The gods he projected became omnipotent rulers who could summon legions of spirits and who could sentence a soul to either eternal bliss or eternal damnation. Man's definition of the divine has been shaped by his experience of the human.

Is religion then merely the product of man's weakness? Could it be that when man finally assumes full control of himself and his environment, religion will lose its *raison d'être*? These questions follow logically once one takes the naturalistic approach.

Another approach, the phenomenological (Eliade 1966), argues that religion will always be with man, for it springs from a basic experience unique to man. He alone can experience the sacred, the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, that mystery at once both immense and enthralling which envelopes certain places, persons, and periods (Otto 1959). The objects of veneration may vary, stones and trees in one culture, bread and wine in another, but they all point to a nameless presence — who has received various names according to one's culture: God, Brahman, the Lord of Heaven. Other thinkers, though not sharing this approach, agree that religion cannot be said to spring entirely from man's helplessness. There are basic questions humans necessarily raise because of their quest for meaning. Such questions as: why are we born? What is the meaning of life? What lies beyond death? These are perennial questions that man, no matter how advanced his society may be, will always ask. On such ground does religion thrive. Religion, defined properly, is a noble enterprise because it seeks to answer man's most basic questions.

However, having taken this position, how then does one explain why religions have varied from one culture to the other or from one historical period to the next? Here is where the naturalistic approach proves useful, for it shows how a variety of factors — the level of technology, modes of allocating wealth and income, and the organization of society — can influence definitions of the divine. As will be shown, for instance, gods are more numerous among agriculturists than among hunters and gatherers, for needs sharply increase once a man plants regularly, builds permanent dwellings, develops specialized trades, and creates complex forms of government.

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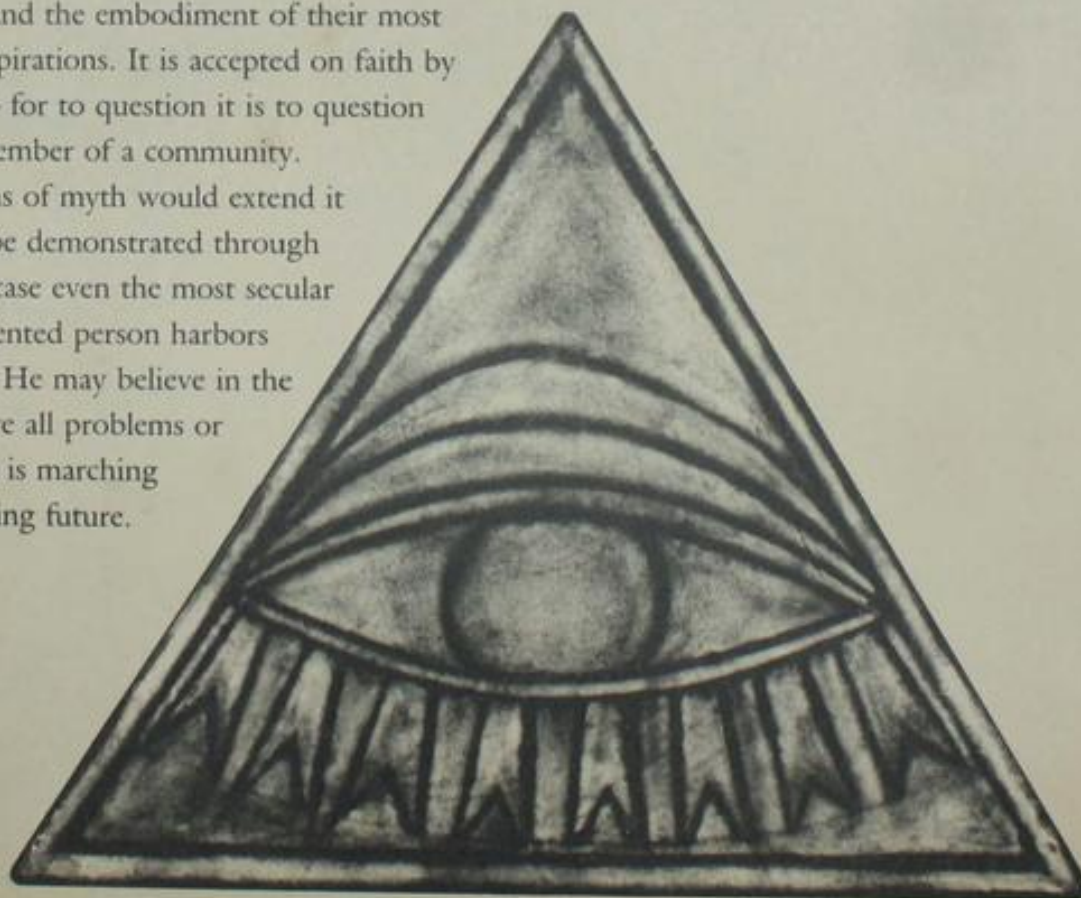


Consequently the divine is defined differently. The perennial basic questions about ultimate meaning remain but the answers differ because the context has changed.

The language in which religious thought is expressed is mythical. A myth is an account of the Original Acts of the Gods. Their main characters are divine or semi-divine beings. These may be unmistakably human, though with extraordinary powers and heroic qualities beyond the capacities of mere mortals. Thus they can lift mountains or pierce the sun. These beings can also take the form of animals likewise gifted with uncanny powers like the Bisayan bird, Manaul, who creates the world. The setting of a myth is primordial time, a time beyond our time, and a space that is different from our accustomed world. Then the boundaries that have since separated high from low, past from present, right from wrong, god from man, nature from culture did not yet exist. This primordial time-space is also one that will succeed this world once it passes away (Eliade 1958).

The activities of these beings explain the origins of the world, with its minerals, plants, animals, and humans. They also explain how important human institutions and activities came to be — such as: conception, birth, circumcision, marriage, incest taboos, healing, agriculture, smithery, pottery-making, sorcery, witchcraft, shamanism, the priesthood. A myth thus makes up the unwritten charter of a people; the model for their everyday behavior; and the embodiment of their most basic values, ideals and aspirations. It is accepted on faith by those who believe in it — for to question it is to question one's very identity as a member of a community.

More recent definitions of myth would extend it to all beliefs that cannot be demonstrated through empirical tests. In which case even the most secular and most scientifically oriented person harbors myths he is not aware of. He may believe in the myth that science can solve all problems or in the myth that mankind is marching inexorably towards a shining future.



Assistant Deities and Powers



Below the Lord of the Upper Sky is a host of *anitos* or *diwatas*, many of whom can do as they please the more distant they are from him. According to Barton, who studied the Ifugao spirit world (1946), these spirits are believed to be immortal, to change form at will, to become invisible, and to transport themselves quickly through space. There are other attributes associated with these powerful spirits. While they can diagnose and cure illness, they can afflict men with misfortune, ill-luck, disease. They can recover a soul if it has been carried off, but they can also coax away a person's soul. Though they prevent the dead from molesting the living, they too cause death. Indeed they can devour parts of the living human body. Men's minds they influence to suggest courses of conduct, such as payment of debt without losing face; passions they dampen so that men will not fight during a celebration; and stomachs they tie to dull the appetite for food and drink. Those who propitiate them know that these invisible presences can increase rice even after it has been stored in the granary, ward off trespassers, make the hunt safe, and bring victory in battle.

Powerful spirits roughly divide into three categories: ancestor spirits, nature spirits, guardian spirits.

Spirits of Ancestral Heroes

Some ancestors, particularly those who were outstanding in farming, hunting, warfare and the arts, acquired more and more powers in the memory of their descendants as time went on. They became fabulous beings. The more illustrious hero-spirits are remembered in the great epics. Others are remembered as culture heroes who taught their people new skills.





In an artistic tour de force pagan gods personified complete with attributes (crocodiles, lizards, shields, etc.) are placed in the niches of a Christian altar.

Some ancestral heroes (Cole 1916; de los Reyes 1909):

Lumabat — first Bagobo mortal to attain the Skyworld (Cole 1916).

Handiong — the hero of the Bikol epic who freed the land from the ravages of wild animals, brought Bikolanos rice, and planted the fruits.

Lumawig — taught the Bontok headhunting, agriculture, the art of building council houses and men's dwellings, and a code of ethics.

Bantugan — the charming, indestructible, much-wedded hero who could repulse any invasion. His cult probably began when the Maranaws were still animist.

SOME GUARDIAN GODS

ON THE FARM

Ikapati — Tagalog goddess of fertility, guardian *anito* of agriculture.

Magbangal — Bukidnon planter god who became the constellation that appears to signal the start of the planting season.

Damolag — an *anito* of the early Zambals who protects the fruiting rice from winds and typhoons.

Lakan-bakod — Tagalog guardian god of the fruits of the earth who dwells in certain kinds of plants used as fences. Some *anitos* carry the title "Lakan" or Prince. They could have been deified kinglets.

Pamahandi — protector of carabaos and horses of the Bukidnon.

Nature Spirits

Not all ancestral spirits become deified. Many remain nameless spirits residing in dark majestic trees and in the deep woods.

Nature Spirits reside in the natural environment, such as trees, rocks, crags, rivers and volcanoes. Humanlike, but much more powerful, these unseen beings are credited with feelings and sensibilities. Accordingly they may be offended and thus cause harm, or they may be propitiated and their friendship gained. Some spirits are represented as being sensitive to a fault as many Filipinos are when confronted with an unfamiliar or unpleasant situation. People do create spirits according to their likeness. On the other hand Frank Lynch, the anthropologist, says that the Filipino's care in handling interpersonal relations may in fact be the result rather than the cause of this belief in an environment filled with sensitive spirits (1970). In moving about, he takes care not to displease the many invisibles who could punish him.

Nature spirits can be either malevolent or beneficent. As in Philippine society as a whole, it all depends on how you deal with them. If you ignore them and hurt their dignity, they can make you sick; however, if you acknowledge them and ask permission to pass by and give them offerings on occasion, then they will reward you.

Some nature spirits:

The Lord of the Mound — spirit of an old man who lives in a termite mound. Throughout prehistoric Southeast Asia, the earth mound was a locus of power probably because of its phallic shape. "*Tabi, tabi po baka kayo mabunggo*" (Excuse me, please, lest I bump you) is the polite way to pass one of these inhabited hills. Though invisible, the *nuno* can be grazed and thus retaliate with a fever or skin rashes.

The Tree Dwellers — Spirits reportedly resided in trees. Thus the Mandayas, who are the largest ethnic group in southwestern Mindanao, believe that *tagbanuwa* and *tagamaling* are spirits who dwell in caves and *balete* trees. The belief persists to this day even among Christian Filipinos. The Ilokano *pugot* and the Tagalog *kapre* are gigantic,

WHEN FISHING

Amansinaya — *anito* of fishermen of the ancient Tagalogs to whom they offer their first catch. Hence the term *pa-sinaya* ("for Sinaya") still used today. Following the theory of god-making Amansinaya could be the soul of a maiden who was drowned and became an *anito* of the water.

Libtakan — god of sunrise, sunset and good weather of the Manobo.

Makabosog — a merciful *diwata* of the Bisayans who provides food for the hungry. (He was once a chief in the Arat River on the coast of Panay).

IN THE FORESTS

Amani kable — ancient Tagalog *anito* of hunters.

Makaboteng — Tinggian spirit guardian of deer and wild hogs.

WHEN REARING A FAMILY

Mingan – goddess of the early Pampangos, mate of the god Suku. (Consorts of the gods fall under the "guardian" category)

Katambay – guardian *anito* for individuals; a kind of inborn guardian angel of the Bicolis.

Malimbung – a kind of Aphrodite of the Bagobos. This goddess made man crave for sexual satisfaction.

Tagbibibi – *diwata* protector of children of the mountain tribes of Mindanao.

WHILE AT WAR

Mandarangan and Darago – Bagobo god and goddess of war. Mandarangan is believed to reside in the crater of Apo Volcano on a throne of fire and blood.

Talagbusao – the uncontrollable Bukidnon god of war who takes the form of a warrior with big red eyes wearing a red garment. This deity can enter a mortal warrior's body and make him fight fiercely to avenge a wrong. But Talagbusao can also drive him to insanity by incessant demand for the blood of pigs, fowls and humans.

cigar-smoking black spirits who sit in deserted houses and up a *balete* or banyan tree with feet dangling to the ground. They can, however, assume any size they want including that of an infant. *Engkantos* also dwell in trees. But the term itself and the description of them as tall, fair-skinned and light-haired beings with high-bridged noses is post-hispanic. *Engkantos*, male or female, sometimes fall in love with mortals and lavish gifts on them (Ramos 1971).

The Babes in the Woods — probably the souls of foetuses or dead children. They are called by the Ilokans *kibaan*. The creature is a foot high, dwells in the fields, can be scalded with boiling water, and even die. The *kibaan* gift friends with gold, a cloak that confers invisibility and a large cup of coconut which is inexhaustible. To those who throw hot water at them, the *kibaan* scatter powder which produces a disagreeable affliction (de los Reyes 1909). Closely related is the Tagalog *patianak* which wails in the forest, like a baby, but inflicts harm. Common in pre-Christian times was the practice of exposing infirm deformed babies in the fields and forests (Alcina 1960). Their heart-wrenching wailing must have given rise to these beliefs.

The Bloodthirsty and Implacable

Among traditional Filipinos, the embodiment of evil is a being that is neither fully human nor fully animal. It stands upright like human beings and has a face; but it preys on human flesh and makes the living sick so that when they die there is carrion for food. Unlike the devil of the Judaeo-Christian-Moslem tradition, this being does not harm the soul by tempting it to sin. The death it causes is physical rather than spiritual. Other spirits can be negotiated with: offerings and kind words win their toleration if not help. It is not possible to do so with these implacable beings. Thus people fear them the most.

The *busaw* feared by the Bagobos of Davao, people the air, the mountains and the forest. They are limitless in number. Most malignant is the *busaw* called *tighanua*. One eye gapes in the middle of the forehead; a hooked chin two spans long upturns to catch the drops of blood that drip from the mouth; and coarse black hair bristles on the body (Benedict 1916). It frequents graves, empty houses and solitary mountain trails. Indeed it may make an appearance at any place outside the safety of one's home.

Guardian Spirits

They are believed to preside over specific human activities such as birth, marriage, and death; over hunting, fishing, farming and fighting. Beneficent and powerful, guardian spirits generally rule from the sky; some, however, stay in their areas of responsibility on earth or in the underworld.

AT DEATH

Masiken – guardian of the underworld of the Igorots, whose followers have tails. **Ibu** – queen of the Manobo underworld whose abode is down below at the pillars of the world.

This information came from the following sources: Jocano 1969; de los Reyes 1909; Garvan 1931; Garvan 1941; Cole 1922; Benedict 1916; Dadale 1989; Mutari-Wilson 1968



MIGHTIER THAN THOU



It was said that the god Captan had power over the winds of the earth and the goddess Maguayen ruled over the winds of the sea. Captan was regal, agile and strong. When happy his breathing produced fine breezes which made the *sampaguitas*, *ylang ylang* and wild lilies exhude their joyful perfume over wide expanses of cogon and sweet basil. When Captan was in a terrible humor, however, his agitated respiration produced great windstorms and cyclones.

One lonely day, Maguayen, genius of the winds of the sea was walking on the surface of the water. In her wake swam her innumerable aides — the big and small fishes, the lobsters and seahorses and other inhabitants of the blue ocean. The lively Maguayen was beautiful to behold. Her hair and whole body were covered with numberless gleaming pearls and mother-of-pearl shells. Teased by the fragrance of the flowers Maguayen stepped on the sandy shore. Suddenly there appeared before her a majestic being dressed in the most graceful plumage of birds in riotous colors.

"Greetings, pretty bubble of the sea," said the brash Captan.

Maguayen looked at the divine being, smiled mockingly and turned quickly away. Just as quickly Captan planted himself firmly in front of the irresistible Maguayen. "I did not mean to annoy you," he said, humbly. "But there are just the two of us in this vast expanse — it would be a pity if we never met. I would like to offer you my services."

Upon hearing these gentle words Maguayen could not but return the salutation. Extending a cold hand she said in a voice of thunder, "Who are you that dare hold conversation with me? Do you not know that with my softest breath I can raise waves in the vast ocean that can cause islets to sink? When I am enraged I can raise foam-laden waves higher than the lofty mountains of earth."

There was a moment of silence. Suddenly a luminous flash of lightning sliced the firmament followed by a deafening crack of thunder.

"Did you see that bolt of light?" asked Captan. "It is one of my many, many subjects who will, at an order, obey me instantly."

Angered at the noise Maguayen said, "Leave at once before you are taken by the sea!"

Scarcely had Captan retired a few steps when there fell on the seashore a vast wave. Had it not been for his agility he would have been dragged to the bottom of the ocean. As soon as the big wave receded Captan was back at the side of the dazzling Maguayen, ready to resume their strange courtship. From her he begged a thousand pardons. It was not his intention to vex the goddess by showing her his subjects.

Surprised at the god's agility Maguayen replied, "I myself wanted to know if there was a being who had power equal to mine. By my will alone I move the sea which capsizes everything on its surface. And when the winds I send forth reach land they tear up everything in their path including the largest trees. I have proteges too numerous to enumerate."

Said Captan: "You asked me who I was. I came to be in the blue of infinite space engendered, as you were too no doubt, by the mightiest of forbears. It is I who send forth those breezes which cool and fill those heavenly clouds with moisture that eventually falls upon the earth as rain. At my signal sparks fly, zigzagging with the thunderbolts, bursting through the air with unimaginable ferocity, tearing up rocks, killing animals, scorching trees and deafening all. Without me the trees, the shrubs and herbs which give life to the world would not be. And when I shake the feathers which protect my body, I produce disastrous whirlwinds which overrun powerful objects in their path including those on your watery surface. Without me those birds with brilliant plumage who fly through the air would have no gladness. All these powers I am offering you as well as my heart and whole being."

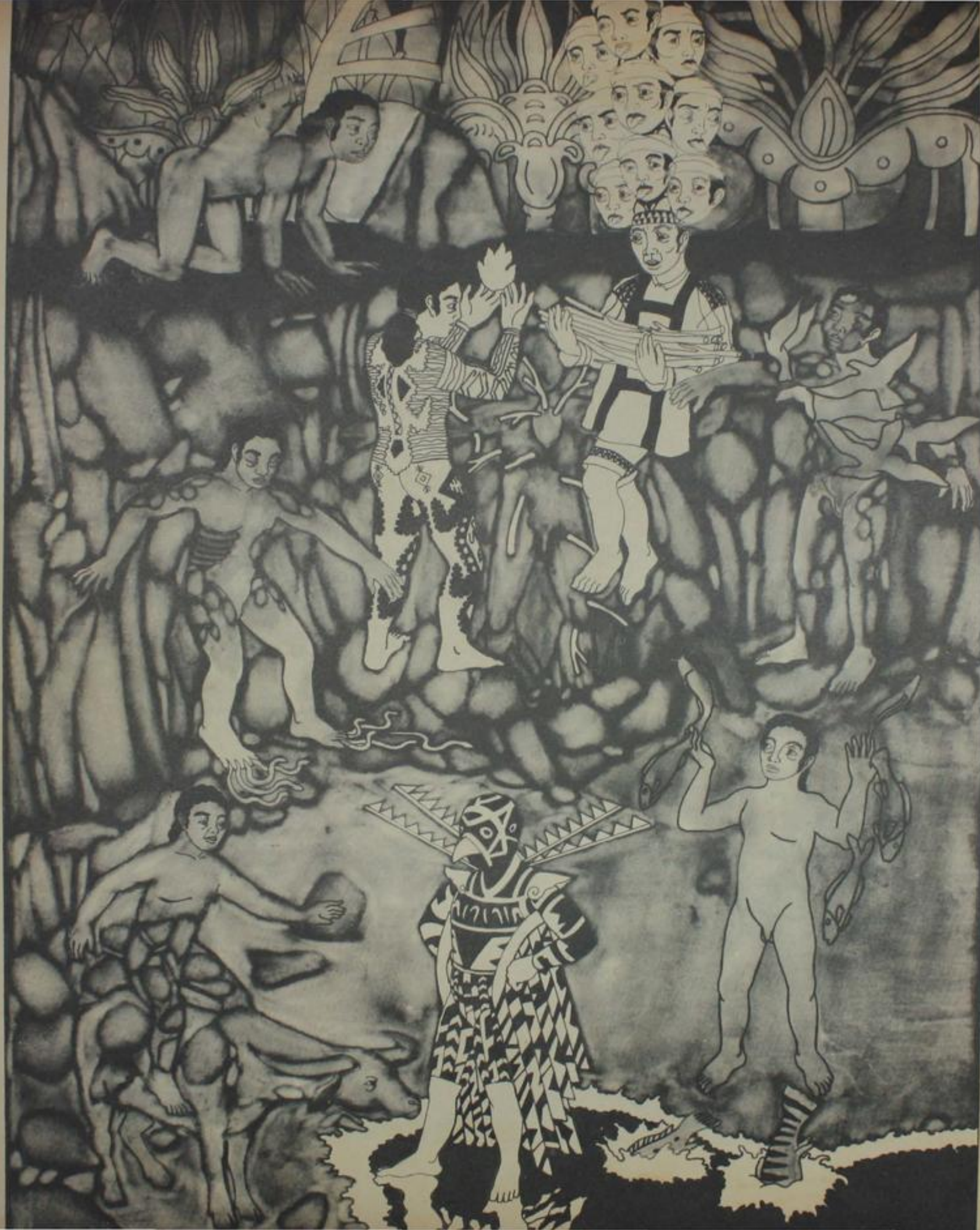
After these words Captan and Maguayen clasped hands and submerged themselves in the sea. And it is believed that since then the genies of the air, the land and the sea were united forever.

(This is not the end of the story for the idyll produced a bamboo plant in the middle of the ocean from which eventually emerged the first man and woman).

— FROM JOSE MARIA PAVON (?) (1838)

Though the authenticity of the Pavon Manuscript's date is dubious, the traditions it records have an authentic ring.





The Native Idea of Creation



o create" is commonly understood as "to produce something out of nothing." When God said, "Let there be light, and there was light, he created light out of nothing. Before that there was only darkness and no material existed out of which the light was made.

Creation out of nothing is called a "first creation," and is found principally in the Judaeo-Christian-Moslem tradition. It requires as creator a perfectly omnipotent being, thoroughly self-sufficient and capable of producing his own creation independent of any other power.

The Second Creation

*From man's back
came the animals that
are hunted (like the
deer) and slung on the
shoulder; from the
armpits, birds; from the
toes, eels; from the
crotch, animals to ride.*

Creation as conceived of by early Filipinos is more in the nature of a "second creation," therefore the making of a particular object out of some underlying material.

We find this in all Philippine creation stories. The creator makes a specific object: the world, the tree or man. Before the creation, the world, the tree or man were nonexistent; a sub-stratum is used to form them — such as wood, clay or rock. In many traditions these substances were always there, from the very beginning. Creation simply formed them into specific objects (Demetrio 1978). Thus Melu, the Bagobo creator, used the leavings of his body skin, which he constantly scrubbed off, in order to fashion the earth. In the Bikol account, after their unsuccessful rebellion against their grandfather, Langit the sky, the copper body of Bulan became the moon, and the golden body of Aldao became the sun (Bonto undated).

In other traditions, not of the Philippines, a ready world was simply lifted up with a fish hook from the bottom of the primordial ocean by the creator. Or, as with the

American Indians, the swimming animals brought up slime from the bottom of the sea, spread it over the back of another animal and it grew into the world (Kirtley 1957).

The Bad Brother

In many of our creation myths, the creator has a "brother," who is envious, short of imagination, and who is responsible for the defects and imperfections of the resulting creation. Thus in the Bagobo myth, after Melu had almost finished making the figures of the first people, his brother Fun Tao Tana came up from his dwelling place in the lowest tier of the underworld, and demanded that the making of the noses be left to him. Melu, to avoid strife, agreed, just before he left for his home in the sky. But Fun Tao Tana placed them upside down. As a result when the rains came, the first people almost drowned because the water flowing from their heads entered their wide-open nostrils. Seeing their plight, Melu came down from his place in the sky and reset the noses.

In a Manuvu myth, Manama's mirror image, the evil Ogassi, envious of the figures the good god had set out to dry, managed to incorporate a few white abaca strands into the clay. Hence the creatures became immortal no longer. They were doomed to grow white hair, get old and die.

The Bukidnons of the Central Highlands of Mindanao have one of the richest troves of oral literature. In their myth of creation, Magbabaya's bad brother, Mangilala, interfered with his clay figures of humans by giving them thin skins and breathing into them. Luckily, Magbabaya covered the extremities of their fingers and toes with superior material from the sky. These became their nails. But sometimes, humans are tempted to do evil — thanks to Mangilala's breath (Cole 1956).

What the motif of the Bad Brother may be saying is that the good and the bad, the positive and the negative, life and death are intertwined in life. One is not possible without the other.

The Loneliness of the Sky God

One reason the world was created was to assuage the loneliness of the creator who lived all alone in the world (Jose 1974). This is definitely a far cry from the Hebrew God who was complete in himself and created the world to share his life. Are cultural patterns reflected here? The chief mode of subsistence in the Philippines was agriculture which requires a cooperative venture. Among the Hebrews, agriculture too was practised. But more favored was shepherding which encourages the individual to be by himself for long periods of time while watching over his flock.

Second creation, the presence of a rival creator, and the creator's loneliness all point to a creator who is less than omnipotent.

THE CREATION OF THE UNIVERSE

In the beginning there was only a small circular space of intense brightness called a *banting*. It was surrounded by a rainbow. And only three beings existed.

Two of them sat facing each other in the narrow confines of the *banting* — one was good, the other evil.

One was the supreme planner, a good Being that looked like man. His name was DIWATA NA MAGBABAYA which means "pure god who wills all things."

The bad Being also had a human body but he had ten heads continuously drooling sticky saliva. His name was DADANHAYAN HA SUGAY which means "lord from whom permission is asked."

These two were held up by a third Being suspended above them who had a hawk-like head, powerful wings and a human body. The hawk-like Being was continually flapping his wings in order to balance the *banting* because of the two Beings in it who were constantly bickering. The beating of his wings produced the wind. Only the winged Being could cool the heads and thus he was their guardian. His name was AGTAYABUN which means "adviser" or "peace-maker."

One day Diwata Magbabaya, the Planner Being who looked like man, thought of enlarging the *banting*. To steady it, he created the earth — the *banting* was in the sky — so that the poor winged Being could rest.

Diwata Magbabaya was a good planner. He knew, however, that he would have need of the soil on which the Ten-Headed Being jealously sat. But the Ten-Headed Being was always so difficult to convince. The god with eagle wings immediately saw the problem. Swiftly, he swooped down and scooped some soil from under the Ten-Headed Being.

The Ten-Headed Being was startled and furious. "Why do you get what is mine without my permission?" he asked. "Don't be angry," said Diwata Magbabaya. "I have a plan. And it is good for all of us. If you will let me use some of your soil, I will steady the *banting* and enlarge it. Then there will be enough space to stretch our legs and walk around so that we do not quarrel all the time."

And so the earth was created. The hawk-like Being could at last rest his wings.

But the soil with which the earth had been made soon became extremely dry. Again Diwata Magbabaya looked longingly at the sticky saliva drooling out of the many-headed Being's ten heads. "If you will let me use some of your saliva we can beautify the earth," the god planner suggested. The Ten-Headed Being was

only too flattered to become part of any beautification project.

And so he consented. Diwata Magbabaya took some of the saliva and mixed it with the soil.

A great rain fell, for endless days, water flowed over the earth. When it receded the Beings saw that various shapes had been

*The Bukidnon Trinity:
a winged being, a ten-
headed being, a good
being who looked like a
man.*



created. There were mountains, hills, valleys, plains and canyons. Enough water still remained for streams and rivers which flowed into a big hole called the ocean. Lush green grass, trees and flowers sprang from the earth and enveloped it. The earth had indeed become beautiful. The three Beings were delighted. They called the place HAL-DAN TA PARAISO which means "Garden of Paradise."

The Supreme Planner had a new idea. "Since we can't always be here, wouldn't it be wise to have Beings like us to watch over the earth?" The winged Being thought it was a great idea and the Ten-Headed Being grudgingly agreed to it.

The three walked around the beautiful Garden. They gathered some earth to serve as the flesh, and

water to serve as the blood. They cut some fine rattan to serve as the veins and arteries, and the soft white wood of the *andalugung* tree to serve as the bones. The Beings moistened the earth with water trying to form the figures, but the soil kept crumbling.

Again Diwata Magbabaya looked towards the Ten-Headed Being and the sticky saliva drooling from his many mouths. "Can we have a little to mould these figures?" he asked. Afraid of being left out of the interesting operation the Ten-Headed Being agreed to mix some of his saliva with the earth.

Now Diwata Magbabaya stood up, put his arms on his hips and told the Ten-Headed Being, "You can make the figures. But you must copy



*They lived in a
circular space of
eternal brightness
and two of them
quarrelled all the
time.*



me exactly." The Ten-Headed Being was not quite convinced but he had no argument at hand and so he resentfully did as he was told.

Soon seven figures, each with only one head and no drooling saliva, were finished by the Ten-Headed Being. The three Beings were pleased with the result. Diwata Magbabaya put the figures side by side. "Let them alone for a while," he told the two others. "I shall go up to the sky to think further how to perfect them."

While the Supreme Planner was gone, however, the Ten-Headed Being decided to work on the figures on his own. He had a few ideas himself. When Diwata Magbabaya happened to look down from the *banting* he was horrified to see that six of the seven figures were already beginning to move. He rushed down at once.

"Didn't I tell you not to touch them while I was thinking of how to perfect them?" Diwata Magbabaya scolded the Ten-Headed Being.

"What makes you believe you alone can make them perfect?" answered the Ten-Headed Being. "Why do you think only you know how to create?"

"Maybe not," said Diwata Magbabaya. "But so far it's my ideas and plans that have enabled us to create the earth. And it was after my image that the figures were made."

"Indeed," said the Ten-Headed Being. "But all the materials used were mine. You had none. Therefore I have as much right as you to do what I want with them."

Each Superbeing had his point. Each could defend his own arguments. As usual the hawk-like Being with the wings served as judge and head-cooler. Since neither one would give in it was agreed that there should be an armed duel. The victor should be recognized as "the greatest" and could decide what to do with all the figures.

Out came the swords and the duel began. The two opponents struck swords as if each were the final blow. Their flashing blades produced the lightning. The combatants were able to go around the world fighting. The winged referee declared a recess and they went to paradise to appraise their wounds. But neither combatant suffered a single scratch!

So the duel continued. The battle became even fiercer and more furious. Whenever the Beings' feet landed on the ground a loud thunderclap was produced. They battled each other so fast and furiously that they went around the world seven times.

After the seventh round the three again retired

to *Haldan ta Paraiso* to examine their bodies. And each one was still unscathed. But this time the swords and metal scabbards on their belts had all melted. They slid down their bodies, sank into the ground and became the metals found under the earth.

Since neither the Good Being nor the Bad Being could win nor lose they decided to settle the matter amicably. Diwata Magbabaya said, "Since you have already begun work on the six figures, just finish them. But let me work on the one figure left."

Thus it was that the six figures that were finished by the Ten-Headed Being became *incantus* or guardian spirits.

The *talabugta* was assigned to look after the soil for cultivation.

The *ibabagsuk* was in charge of the growing plants.

The *bulalakaw* became guardian of the water and all its living creatures.

The *mamemelig* was to watch over the forest.

The *lalawig* had as its special charge the bees and their honey.

The *mamahandi* was to guard over whatever wealth man acquired, therefore his cows and carabaos, his crops and his farm house.

Like all the creatures made from the efforts of the Superbeings, the *incantus* contain both good and evil qualities (as does man). They take care of nature and will give of its fruits. But they expect respect and gratitude in the form of prayers and sacrifices of pigs and chickens. The six creatures take quick offense and send drought or flood, or pestilence or sickness to those who do not thank them or seek their permission to build a house, or to harvest the field, or to cut the first slice of meat.

Diwata Magbabaya also finished his figure. As a distinguishing feature he endowed it with intelligence. He had created the first human being. To the first man was entrusted the *Haldan ta Paraiso*.

The small bits of clay cut off from the seven *diwata* as they were being carved were not wasted. They became other living creatures. Those scooped from the armpits became birds, fowls, insects and other flying creatures. The clay sliced from the backs of the figures became the food that had to be carried on one's back such as deer, wild pigs and the like. The bits cut out from between the fingers became the fishes and other water creatures that are caught with the fingers. Those cut from the crotch became the animals that one has to ride astride such as horses, cows and carabaos.

The influences on the indigenous religion of the Philippines: Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity.

Three major world religions have left an imprint on indigenous religion in the Philippines. To reconstruct what this religion is like, we have to sort out the foreign.

Starting around the third century AD, Hinduism began to spread throughout the Malay Peninsula, Sumatra, and Java. The cradle of the newcomer was India where it began over a millennium before Christ.

It has been said that Hinduism resembles tropical vegetation: it has many cults and deities, many schools and philosophies — all of which interweave somehow. The central Hindu insight is that there is one Divine Principle, One Godhead. But its manifestations are diverse. Essentially the manifestations are Threefold, hence the Godhead is called the Trimurti. Brahma, the still center of the Godhead is the source of creation; Vishnu is the beneficent energy that flows through all things; and Siva is the eternal rhythm responsible for both destruction and regeneration. These manifestations complement each other. To show Brahma's ancient majesty, he is depicted with four bearded heads and arms. Vishnu, on the other hand, is an attractive four-armed, blue-skinned young man who holds a conch and a lotus, and rides the eagle Garuda. Siva's principal emblem is his phallus, the most sacred object of worship. He dances worlds in and out of existence.

The second insight is that man attains salvation by escaping the endless cycle of birth and death. For as long as he does not purify himself of his desires, whether for material things or for self-advancement, he will be born and reborn again. After raising a family, man should aim to be an ascetic, alone in a forest hut and dedicated to prayer; ultimately in his old age, he should wander about as a beggar living on alms. When all desire has been quenched, the finite self at last merges into the infinite God.

A religion that developed in India alongside Hinduism in the sixth century BC was Buddhism which rejected its many gods and sought instead to attain enlightenment through meditation and asceticism. Though the two religions were rivals in India, they spread together in the Malay Peninsula and Indonesia and were in fact the guiding principle of two empires: Sri-Vijaya and Majapahit.

Did the Philippines form part of these empires, as used to be taught? The present consensus is no. However, ideas from Hinduism did enter Mindanao and Sulu, for trade took place between those two places and the empires.

Thus the Bukidnon creation myth has three divine persons. Dadanhayan ha Sugay has ten heads all drooling saliva; this looks like an extravagant version of the four heads of Brahma. Diwata na Magbabaya who looks like a human being (one head, two arms, two

legs) may be a version of Siva who is so depicted. Agtayabun seems to be a composite of Siva and Vishnu. He has the Garuda's hawk-like head and also the dancing motions of Siva, Lord of the Cosmic Dance.

The multi-layered universe found in Mindanao and even Bisayas are of Indian influence as will be shown in the next chapter. However, in the absence of courts, temples, and priests organized on the Indian model, more basic Indian beliefs did not enter (Francisco 1985). For instance, the notion that every man must gradually divest himself of all attachment to the senses in order to attain union with the One, and thus escape the cycle of rebirth.

During the first century AD, a new religion sprang up in Palestine. The followers of Jesus Christ taught that man was indeed born, removed from God, because of the original sin committed by the first human couple, Adam and Eve. However, Christ the Son of God had redeemed man through his suffering, death and resurrection. There were Three Divine Persons in God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Son had gone back to the Father. But he had sent his Spirit to dwell within the community of his followers. Through baptism, man could be cleansed of original sin and become Christ's fellow; through prayer and good work, man could battle the constant temptation to violate God's laws; through the Thanksgiving Meal where bread and wine were blessed, Christ became present again as nourishment for the soul. A life of continual self-denial and prayer was held up as an ideal; and, along with this, service to one's fellowmen. Thus Christ had given up all, including his life, for the sake of humanity.

Seven centuries later, another religion took form among the merchants of Arabia. Mohammed acknowledged the greatness of the Prophets of Israel, especially Christ. But he claimed to be the last of the Prophets. His message was clear and simple: there was but One God and Mohammed was his Prophet. Salvation consisted in absolute submission to God's will.

were various duties exacted from the believer. He had to pray five times a day, pay a portion of his income to charity, fast during the sacred period of Ramadan, and travel in pilgrimage at least once in his lifetime to the Holy City of Mecca.

Both Islam and Christianity taught that below God were good and evil spirits, angels and demons, who battled each other for the souls of men. Man therefore had to struggle hard to reach heaven, the abode of the just, and avoid hell, the realm of the wicked. Being militantly monotheistic, both religions forbade the practice of other religions especially those that had idols and believed in many gods. During one Sinulog Festival in Cebu, there was a float with a "Moslem princess making offerings to idols." Obviously such a float is inaccurate — and highly insulting to Moslems. Unfortunately, the popular mind keeps confusing Islam with the earlier, indigenous religion.

Islam overthrew Hindu empires in India and Indonesia, and reached Sulu by the 14th century, or even earlier, via trade. Christianity came in during the 16th century through Spanish soldiers and missionaries who had just completed the overthrow of two empires in the New World. Unlike Hinduism whose influence on local religion often has to be guessed at, the influences of the newcomers are much more obvious — for they are still very much around.

Some elements of these two traditions have affected the beliefs of minority groups that worshipped nature spirits at the time scholars visited them. Through trade, visits to Christian and Moslem settlements, and occasional missionary efforts, the unconverted inevitably picked up new concepts that they integrated into their beliefs.

Both Islam and Christianity revere the Old and New Testaments. The difference is that Moslems regard the Koran as the Word of God.

Moslem and Christian elements that appear in some of the local mythologies are the following:

1. The belief in one God who punishes sin, understood as the violation of an objective divine law, by sending the sinning soul to eternal hellfire.
2. Heaven as a reward for good deeds, understood as compliance with God's law and located in the sky.
3. Winged angels and devils battling with each other for control over humans.
4. Adam and Eve, as the parents of mankind, residing in a bountiful garden called Paradise before they committed the first sin.

Disentangling these foreign elements from stories where they appear helps reveal the original fabric of our indigenous religion.





The First People on Earth



Philippine myths in general tell the origin of people in two ways:

1. *The first people came from the skyworld.* They are actually children of sky gods who settled on earth. An example of this is the Palawan myth which tells that the first people on earth came from the sky by means of the *balugu* vine in search of *sago*. To prevent them from returning to the sky, Lali, master of wild plants and animals, deceived them by putting on the *balugu* vine blossoms of the *aruka* which have a putrid smell, like decaying human flesh. And he told them that their fathers and mothers had died. Thus deceived they were discouraged from climbing up to the sky again. Lali then cut the vine and the people had to remain on earth (Macdonald 1988).

2. *The first people were created.* As in the Christian creation, some people were made of earth but there were other far more imaginative materials involved in creation. The most popular and the earliest is the bamboo.

In the Bontok version of the bamboo story, Lumawig created people from reeds (Jocano 1969). In the Bisayan myth the god plants a seed which becomes a bamboo tree which is pecked and split by a bird (B. and R.-V.). In Sulu the first man finds a bamboo with only one human being in it — a female (Saleeby 1912). The Ilokanos claim that the creator god Angngalo spat and that his sputum became the first man and woman. He then placed them inside a bamboo tube, sealed it and cast it into the sea (Villanueva undated). The waves carried the tube to the shores of the Ilokos. The man and the woman emerged from the bamboo and settled there.

From other trees, such as the banana and the coconut, man was also believed to have

One day a strange
object which he did not
recognize as a human
hair drifted downstream.

originated (Laurence 1965; Alcina 1960). The Negritos claim that the first human beings were made out of blades of grass woven together (Ramos 1977). The original Bagobo couple were shaped out of corn meal (Ramos 1977).

Wood, soft or hard, carved into two human forms is the material of man according to the Mansakas, the Tirurays and the Palawanos (Magaña undated; Piang 1931).

Among the inhabitants of Mindanao and Sulu the first man and woman were hatched from the eggs of a large sacred bird (that could talk, said some) (Cole 1916; Salceby 1912). This type of origin story is not found outside of Mindanao and Sulu.

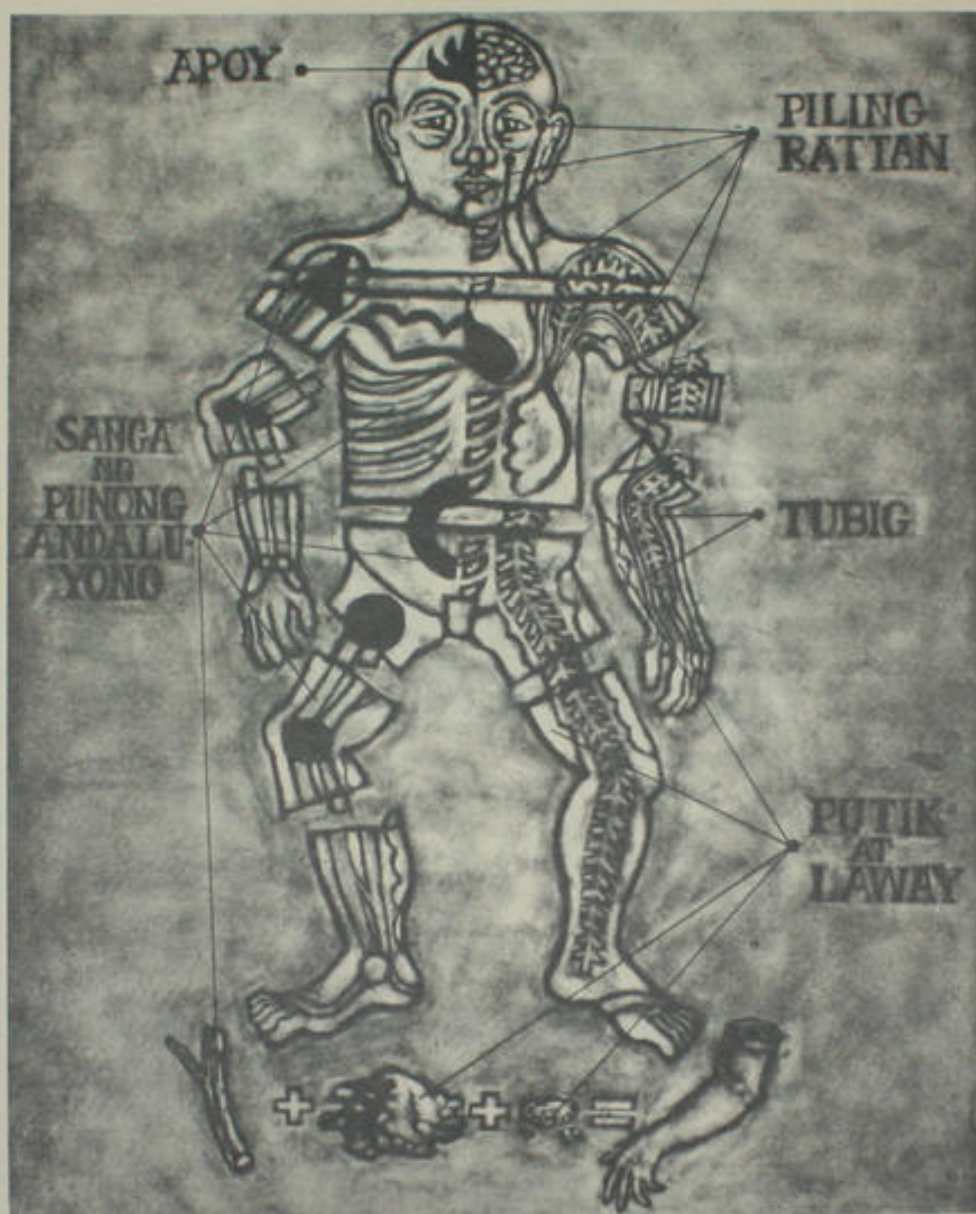
The most often told story of creation with the use of clay is that of the Malay Filipino, baked medium brown in the celestial oven, not burned like the Negroes, nor underbaked like the Americans. Earlier creation stories utilizing lumps of earth molded by the god's hands are found among groups from north to south. In some stories the earth used is referred to as mud "which is why if we do not bathe for a long time soil can be rubbed off our skin" (Wood 1957).

The fanciful Bilaan, on the other hand, say the first people were fashioned out of beeswax. But the figures melted when placed near the fire prompting the creators to search for a better material (Cole 1913).

By far the most interesting material used for creation is that of Melu who made the earth and the first human beings out of the rubbings from his body which he was always cleaning with his fingers (Cole 1913). Gross as creation from dead skin (*libag*) may sound, one must not forget that Melu is a god and that all parts of him, even unwanted scruff, is divine. The first human couple of the Bikols evolved out of two hairs that grew from the cut arm of Bulan, the moon god (Arcilla undated). The earth too was made out of the nail cuttings of the Manuvu gods (Manuel undated). And Angngalo, biggest of the giant gods, urinated into all the hollows and canals of the earth which became the rivers and the seas (Edralin undated). That is why, the creation myths tell us, human beings, the earth and the seas must always be accorded respect — because they are part of and therefore extensions of divine beings (Demetrio 1978). A similar reasoning is behind stories of the first people coming down from the sky — man can claim descent from the Father on High.

As in other parts of Island Southeast Asia, many of these creation myths emphasize complementary opposites. Thus sky and sea are pitted with each other and, out of their quarrel, land forms. A bird releases the first human couple by tapping on the bamboo that holds them; paradoxically, the bamboo's destruction creates new life. What emerges is not a single human being but a couple who are the opposite of each other, being male and female. The high deity itself may consist of a couple: either a good and a bad brother, or a male and a female. The myths seem to be saying that by the very fact that beings differ from each other, contrast and conflict are inevitable. Male and female, good and bad, destruction and creation all imply each other.

PEOPLE MADE OF CLAY



During the early days, there was no person living in this world except God. One day God thought of creating human beings to make use of the trees, animals, fruits, rivers and forests that he had made.

God was kneading a ball of clay and then he decided to make a man out of it. And so he gave it a shape. He used his little finger to poke eyes into the clay. He used a sharp bamboo strip to slice a mouth. Later he blew into its mouth as hard as he could and there was life.

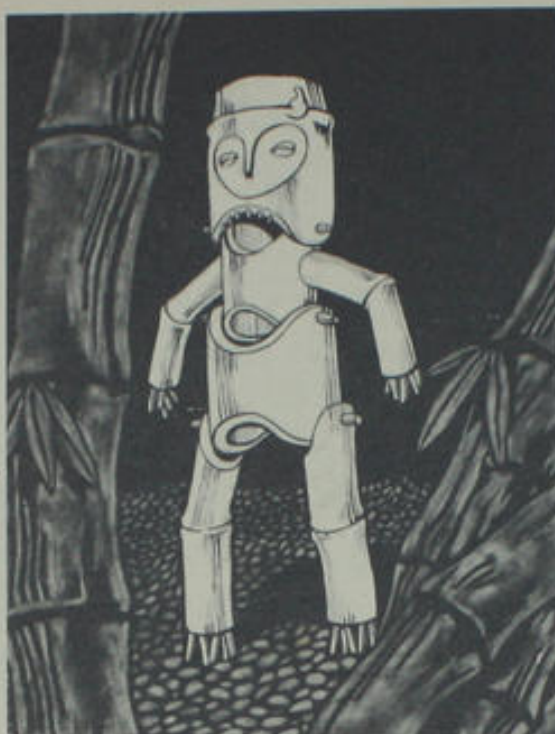
And he sent the first man down to earth. After several days, the man he made went back to God for he did not want to live on the earth alone.

So God had to make another person out of clay using the same method. The only difference was that he sliced also the lower part of the woman to make her useable to the man. God blew on this piece of clay and the woman too came to life.

God sent the man and woman down to earth and told them to multiply.

- C.B. JARAMILLO (undated)

THE MAN AND THE WOMAN OF THE BAMBOO



In the beginning of time, it is said, there was only the sky and there was only the sea. And a bird of prey flew between the sky and the sea without finding a place to rest. For there was no place to alight in the sky and nowhere in the sea.

And tired of flying continuously, the bird thought to create a quarrel between the sky and the sea. Flying upwards, the bird said to the sky: The sea has said that it wishes to rise and submerge you with water. And the sky said: If it does so, that will be unfortunate, for I will hurl upon it rocks and islands. I will drop into the sea so many rocks and islands that it will have to go around these and there will be too little space for the waves to rise high enough to drown me.

This the bird reported at once to the sea, who became so angry that it started throwing its waves up with such force and determination that the sky began to fear. It raised itself up a little higher to keep from being submerged. Do you see what it is trying to do? said the bird, flying from the sea to the sky. Whereupon the aroused sea redoubled its vigor and rose up to even greater heights. And the sky, no longer able to contain itself, began to throw down many rocks and many islands which thundered to the bottom of the sea. With their weight the sea subsided to its former level, for with the rocks and the islands, it could no longer rise to any great height.

The bird of prey gleefully flew down, finding rest at last from its continuous and wearying flight, upon a bit of earth.

While the bird rested on the island, a length of bamboo with two nodes was washed to the shore by the surf, roughly hitting the feet of the tired

bird. The bird moved farther down the shore to avoid it but again the bamboo was washed ashore to where the bird was, again hitting its feet. Thereupon the maddened bird pounced upon the bamboo and began to peck hard at the nodes.

The strength of the pecking split open the piece of bamboo. And, lo and behold, a brown sturdy creature was revealed sleeping in the hollow of the first node. And from the other node, a creature with supple limbs and flowing hair stepped down. And they stood on the vast and quiet island — the first man and woman upon the world.

The man (whose name was *Silalak*), approached the woman (whose name was *Sikabay*). He said: Now surely we must be wedded together so as to multiply and fill the earth with children. But the woman appeared stricken at this proposal. How can we marry, said she, when we are brother and sister, having come, as you can see, from the same bamboo. If we marry we shall be punished by our gods *Maguay* and *Malaon*.

Do not be afraid, the man told the first woman. It is all right for us to marry. But if you have any doubt, let us ask the fish in the sea. And agreeing on this, they walked to the edge of the sea and asked the silvery tunnies who replied that it was all right, they had also married, brothers and sisters together, and had multiplied greatly, as the man and woman could see, and they had not been punished by the gods for it.

But still the woman did not want to marry her brother for fear of the wrath of their gods. If you are still uncertain, said the man, then let us see what the birds have to say. And they walked into the cool of the forest to ask the opinion of the

doves resting in the trees. And the doves gave the same reply as the fishes, saying that it was good that the man and the woman should marry and beget children, for they themselves had done so, for which reason they had multiplied so much on earth, and the gods had not been displeased.

But still the woman would not marry her brother for fear of their gods. She said if she was to marry, it would only be after asking some god of their own, and if he said yes, then they would marry, but not before. So the first man agreed that they should ask their own god Linok who was the god of the earthquake. And Linok replied that it was all right, it was understandable, it was proper that they should marry in order to enlarge the world with their children, and never would the gods rage.

And so at last the woman was convinced, because the fishes and the birds and Linok, the god of the earthquake had said so. And the first man and woman were wedded by Linok. And they were happy, it is said.

A little later, the woman became pregnant, and gave birth all at one time to a large family of boys and girls. These children, however, grew up to be idlers, doing nothing but eating and sleeping all day. They did nothing worthwhile to help in their sustenance, and much less did they help their parents to earn a living. The time came when the children could no longer be supported, but still

they never would do a stroke of work. Thereupon the parents became enraged and decided to throw the children out of their house.

The father took a fat stick, and on entering the house and seeing them all still playing and idling, began to shout: Get out of this house or I will beat you to death, each and everyone! And the children scampered away in terror, never having seen the father so angry.

Some of the children fled outside of the house of their father; others ran into the bedroom, some stayed in the living room though cowering. Still others went to the kitchen, hiding themselves among the unwashed pots and the chimneys.

And so it came about that from those who entered the bedroom came descendants who were lords and chiefs, and therefore respected. And from those who stayed in the living room came the warriors and nobles who were free and paid nothing. And from those who hid behind the walls of the house descended the slaves. Those who fled to the kitchen and hid among the sooty pots spawned the Negritos, who live in the mountains of the Philippines. As for those who left their father's house and never returned nor were ever heard from, came all the other peoples in the world.

And this is the story of the creation of the earth and the beginning of mankind according to the Bisaya.

— FROM THE BOXER CODEX

which came out in 1590, author unknown. Translated by Carlos Quirino and Mauro Garcia (1958)

MANDAYA

FIRST PARENTS FROM THE EGG

In the early days before there were any people on the earth, the *limokon* (a kind of dove) were very powerful and could talk like men though they looked like birds. One *limokon* laid two eggs, one at the mouth of the Mayo River and one farther up its course. After some time these eggs hatched, and the one at the mouth of the river became a man, while the other became a woman.

The man lived alone on the bank of the river for a long time, but he was very lonely and wished many times for a companion. One day when he was



crossing the river something was swept against his legs with such force that it nearly caused him to drown. On examining it, he found that it was a hair, and he determined to go up the river and find whence it came. He traveled up the stream, looking on both banks, until finally he found the woman, and he was very happy to think that at last he could have a companion.

They were married and had many children, who are the Mandaya still living along the Mayo River today.

— MABEL COOK COLE (1916)



CHILDREN FROM THE SKYWORLD

Lumawig ordered a brother and a sister to be washed down from the Skyworld by a strong rain in order to populate the earth.

Kabigat of the Skyworld and Bugar, wife of Kabigat, brought forth many children, brought forth Bugar and Wigan. At mid-forenoon they began to eat then chew betelnut. Said the father: "Go dig tubers on the mountain of the skyworld."

Wigan and Bugar agreed. Brother and sister packed up betels and walked through the outskirts of their village in the skyworld. They ascended the steep of the mountain of the skyworld. They sat down a while. When cooled off and breezed they chewed. Said Wigan: "So much for that. Let us now dig tubers." They hurried.

At noon, their father in the skyworld spoke: "Thou Rain, pour down, fill the brooks to overflowing. Carry down the children!" Rain poured down, descending like strings from a hipbag. Bugar and Wigan, brother and sister, were carried down and landed on the level of the Upstream Region (or the earthworld). "Alas, father! There is no house of ours here. He told us to go tuber-digging and then caused us to be carried down."

At night time, Kabigat of the Skyworld tied rice wine, jars, dogs, chickens, pigs, cats and likewise a granary with rice to a house in the skyworld.

"Thou, house, slide down to the Upstream Region, to the level place of the Upstream Region."

The house slid down to the Upstream Region to the place where the children had made their shack. They were asleep. In a little while the leader of the cocks crowed. Brother and sister descended. Said Wigan, "Why is there a house here? There was none yesterday." Brother and sister investigated. Said Bugar: "These here are a house of ours and a granary of ours from the skyworld." In the morning brother and sister walked about, every day they walked about their neighborhood in the Upstream Region.

On the morrow Wigan decided to go hunting. The dog trailed the quarry, pursued it far downstream. "How can I bring down my quarry when the land is so level?" he asked Bugar as they took down their eating baskets.

Wigan went downstream, came to the Downstream Region, dammed the river with stones, reinforced the dam with timbers, plastered it with clay and then returned upstream. Said Wigan: "Thou house, become tall so that thou reach up to Awitingan (a mountain)." On the third day they saw from the tall house that the level place of the Upstream Region was entirely covered with water and that all the things that moved on earth were drowned. They came down on the slope of Awitingan. Wigan arrived at the Downstream Region and destroyed his dam. He saw that mountains were carved out by the rushing waters. Said Wigan, "Now indeed the game may be overtaken, for mountains have been carved out and the pigs will become tired."

At mid-forenoon he went to hunt. The wild pig was easily killed. He carried it home to the Upstream Region and at night he ate. He cleaned up where he ate, descended to the place beneath the house where he had been sleeping every night. In the middle of the night, he went up to the house and lay with his sister and then returned below the house. On the morrow he went again to hunt; he quickly killed the quarry.

At night, he returned. Brother and sister ate and Wigan went below the house to sleep. And his sister put lime on her breasts and navel. Bugar slept and Wigan again ascended and lay with Bugar and returned below. In the morning, Bugar saw the lime on Wigan. Said Bugar, "Then that was thou who once came up?" Said Wigan her brother, "Yes, indeed, because there are no other people with whom we can marry and how else shall we multiply?"

And their father and mother in heaven looked down on them. "Let it be so," said Kabigat, "so that there be a way for them to increase."

And they increased and increased, they brought forth nine, who were four girls and five boys.

And this is the story of the first people sent from the skyworld by god.

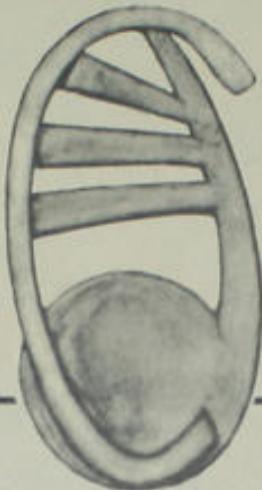
- ROY FRANKLIN BARTON (1955)



UTTING



RDER

INTO THE  COSMOS



All about the Skyworld



he sky, so high and far away, has always teased the mind of man. At sunrise and sunset it is aglow with the colors of the rainbow. During the day it is clear blue and bright. In the evening when the moon is full, the sky is also bright, but with softer, more subdued light. On moonless nights, the dark sable canopy of the sky is dotted with a million pinpoints of stars, some of which, astronomers tell us, have long ceased to exist, but whose lights are still visible even to the naked eye.

The height and distance of the sky is, for religious people, the symbol of the Supreme Lord's majesty and power. It suggests that, however close he may be to us, he is also far removed from us, altogether different, altogether mysterious.

Despite the distance and height of the sky, peoples all over the world in their myths and legends retain a memory of an original closeness, a stage of the world when the sky and its deities were very close to the earth. The Greeks, the Egyptians, and other peoples tell of how touchable the sky was before. And we in the Philippines are not wanting in such stories.

The Low-Lying Sky

From north to south myths abound telling of the low-lying sky, namely, the terrible heat that people on earth suffered because the sun shone close at hand.

Ilonggo myths say that in the beginning the sky hung near — it could be reached with a stick — so that the deity could hear the people when they called to him, and he could provide their needs. Then one day a chief threw a feast and one of the warriors, drunk with coconut wine and dancing a war dance with his spear, struck the sky's underbelly. A divinity was wounded. Angered, the gods raised the sky far above the earth (Fansler 1921).

One day a dancing warrior, drunk with coconut wine hit the underbelly of the sky, wounding a deity.

The Bagobos say their original ancestors were born old. The sky hung low, so low that at noontime these old people had to creep into deep holes and live in the ground to keep from being scorched. When they pounded their rice in their mortars, it had to be before the sun was up, and they had to kneel on the ground to be able to raise the arm with the pestle.

One day the old woman Tuglibong got irritated and scolded the sky, "Go higher — can't you see I can hardly pound my rice?" So the sky began to retreat. When it had gone about five fathoms the woman shouted, "Go up still more!" The outraged sky rushed up and has forever eluded the reach of man (Benedict 1916).

In a Cordillera variant, the woman, before pounding rice, hung her comb and string of beads on the low sky. When in anger the sky raised itself up, the comb became the moon and the scattered beads the stars (Vanoverbergh 1955).

Sometimes a giant, such as the Ilocano Angngalo, simply lifts up the sky with his hands, Atlas-style, to its present height. The Ifugaos carved the extensive rice terraces from the tall mountains of Banawe. Granary gods play an important role, for they watch over their large stores of grain. These gods or *bulol* are always depicted as sitting down. But they have stood up to heave the sky.

Another reason the heat was unusual was that both sun and moon used to shine together at the same time. Day and night did not alternate. Because the sun had two eyes, Kabunian, Lord of the Cordillera, blinded one eye of the sun and decreed that he shine only during the day and the moon at night. In a Palawan myth, on the other hand, there were originally seven moons and seven suns. Tambuq, the giant, submerged the suns and moons in the sea and so cooled the air (Macdonald 1988).











The sky hung so low that at noontime the old people had to creep into deep holes to keep from being scorched.

Jaws

The sky was thus not always benevolent. It could be oppressive. The horizon where the sky and the earth meet had sharp teeth that kept opening and closing, just like an animal chewing. Every time people approached the horizon, the sinister motions began. But, to the Bagobo, the horizon was his entry point to the skyworld. The individual had to jump through very quickly or be caught with a snap by the jaws and ground to pieces (Benedict 1916).





 KAPATAGAN	 BUNDOK	 LAWA	 ILOG
 GUBAT	 BULKAN	 BUROL	 PULO

The universe is a big plate with a smaller dome on it that opens and closes. The sky dome has sharp teeth that will crush any mortal trying to get through.

AN ETHNIC GUIDE

The Philippines is a fleet of some 7,100 islands, many of them unnamed, a number of them inaccessible from the rest. In the interior of the big islands, tall mountain ranges climb the skies — and divide one side from the other. Until fairly recently, immense forests have covered many of the islands. In many areas, roads have either not existed or have been unreliable during the heavy rain. Not surprisingly, the ways of life in the Philippines are many, and the languages diverse. Given the large forest cover, many groups have preferred to live either by foraging for wild plants and animals or by swidden agriculture, also called slash-and-burn and *kaingin*. Wet-rice cultivation actually requires more effort than either of these two activities. Dikes and paddies have to be made, the fields plowed and harrowed, the soil fertilized, and the carabao pastured. If the forests are abundant, one can live comfortably on either foraging or swidden. When asked why

Up north live the Kalingas who developed a unique system of settling conflicts. They tell similar tales. Sister Maria Placidus Birkmeyer (1979) describes the Kalinga universe as looking like a big plate with a smaller dome or hemisphere resting on it. The plate is the earth, the dome, the sky's cupola. The Kalinga imagines the sky cupola as not meeting the earth exactly at its extreme border as it is smaller than the plate. The dome is not transparent, but opaque and solid. In fact its rim is three meters thick!

Once a day, for a very short time, the rim of the sky lifts up on its eastern side. (The western side remains fixed, as if it had a hinge). Then the cupola drops back heavily on the earth. A person, nimble enough to get to that edge of the earth beyond the sky's cupola, will have no trouble getting to the skyworld.

In an Ifugao story a brother and a sister occasionally go to the god Lumawig's abode in the skyworld to consult him about their problems. On the way they have to pass the horizon where sky and earth meet, both solid, and allowing transit only occasionally. At the arrival of the two, the passage could be open or it could not. Sometimes, just to be sure they send their dog ahead. It may happen that the passage is too narrow but they try to make it wider by placing some objects in the gaps. These objects — stones, trees, are usually crushed between the two solid bodies, but eventually the road becomes free (Vanoverbergh 1972).

The Many-Layered Sky

Many Philippine peoples speak of a seven-layered sky. Layers of the sky show Indian influence and are therefore more prevalent in the Philippine South. Hindus believe that the individual passes through cycles of birth and death, until he is finally purified of his desires and attains Eternal Repose. In the meantime, with every death, he enters levels of heaven or hell, according to his merits, and experiences varying degrees of bliss or suffering. There are seven heavens that rise above the earth and seven hells below it. When word of this vision entered the islands, however, the vision was altered completely. The sky was pictured as having seven layers, like a condominium, each inhabited by a particular deity. And the notion that the soul is reborn continually until it is totally cleansed of its passions was dropped.

Thus the Bukidnon sky is divided into seven tiers; and the world below the earth's surface also has seven tiers, but only three of the latter were identifiable.

The vision of a many-layered universe became more simplified as it diffused northward. In the Bisayas, the entire universe was conceived of as having only seven layers:

First layer: the base; uninhabited; contains nothing.

Second layer or *Tubignon*: made up of water. Spirits who inhabit the bottom of the seas and oceans, such as mermaids and sea fairies, have a kingdom of their own in this layer.

they refuse to settle down and practise wet-rice cultivation, foragers and swiddeners have retorted, "Why break our backs toiling under the hot sun when, with a little effort, we have food for everyday?" As a result many small groups have continued to lead the lives of their — and our — ancestors in the depths of the forests, away from the cities and the seats of power. In the process, they have preserved their ancient lore.

I. IN LUZON

Negrito (or Agta or Ata) — Zambales, Sierra Madre
Isneg — Apayao
Kalinga — Kalinga, northern part of the Cordillera
Bontok — Bontok, central part of the Cordillera
Ifugao — Ifugao, southeastern part of the Cordillera
Ibaloi — Benguet, where Baguio is
Kankanaï — Benguet, northern part
Tinggian (or Itneg) — Abra
Ilokano — Ilocos; Cagayan Valley; northern part of Central Luzon

Pangasinense – Pangasinan
Kapampangan – Pampanga
Tagalog – Central Luzon; the Metropolitan Region; southwestern Luzon
Bikol – Bikol Peninsula

II. IN MINDORO

Hanunoo Mangyan – (biggest of the collective group called Mangyan) – Mindoro

III. IN THE VISAYAS

Negrito (or *Agta* or *Ata*) – The mountains of Panay and Negros

Sulod – The mountains of Panay

Capizeño – Aklanon; Antiqueño

Ilonggo – Panay; Negros Occidental

Cebuano – Cebu; Western Leyte

Waray – Eastern Leyte; Samar

IV. IN PALAWAN

Tagbanuwa – Palawan

V. IN MINDANAO

Pagan Groups:

Negrito (or *Agta* or *Ata*) – northeastern region

Manobo – Bukidnon (Bukidnon-Manobo); western Cotabato (Ilianon Manobo); Sarangani, South of Davao del Sur (Sarangani Manobo); Northern Davao (Dibabawan Manobo)

Third layer or *Idalmunon* (from *dalum* or *deep*): located in the bowels of the earth and inhabited by underground spirits.

Fourth layer or *Lupan-on*: the earth we live in. This space is shared by numerous beings, such as fairies or *engkantos*, with whom mankind is supposed to co-exist. Since they are invisible we often take over their space without realizing it. Hence the ailments we bring on ourselves.

Fifth layer or *Kahanginan*: the atmosphere directly above the earth's surface. Two denizens are the *bentohangin*, a flying horse that is half-human, and the *hubot*, a huge bird that looks like an umbrella flying.

Sixth layer or *Ibabaw-non*: inhabited by human mediums or *babaylan* who intercede for man with the spirits.

Seventh layer or *Langit-non*: the abode of Maka-ako, the creator of the universe (Magos 1986).

The layers of the sky became even fewer further north among the Ifugaos of the high Cordillera. E. Arsenio Manuel (1989: p.c.) says that originally there used to be only two places in the mythical world of the Ifugao — *daya* (east or downstream) and *lagud* (west or upstream). Sky layers came in later and even then were fewer in number than in Mindanao. Most likely the foreign concept travelled by word-of-mouth rather than through direct teaching by Hinduized migrants. Consequently, the vision's content thinned out even more. The Ifugao sky has only four layers — in descending order called Hudog, Luktag, Hubulan and Kabuniyan. (The name of the lowest layer of the Ifugao sky is the same as that of the high god of the Bontoks). Each horizontal layer resembles the rest. The upward surface of each is earthen and carries fields and gardens while the lower surface facing downward is made of smooth blue stone. The Kabuniyan layer hangs immediately above the earthworld and that is the sky we see (Beyer 1913).

In these many-layered universes, the divinities of the highest regions of the skyworld do not see directly that which takes place in the lower spheres. The resident of the highest layer therefore calls to the one below him, and the next to the one further down. Thus the principal god in Hudog, the topmost layer, gives an order to his son in Luktag, who then orders his son in Hubulan, the second region. The latter then passes the orders to Liddum, the deity residing in Kabuniyan, the lowest sky region. It is Liddum who communicates directly with the Ifugaos on earth (Beyer 1913). On a clear day, anyone standing on the edge of the lowest layer can look down and see the earthworld.

Gods watched their creation just as if they were seated on a porch. The god Kabuniyan could focus a beady eye on his creature, Wigan, as the latter worked all day, planting ricefield after ricefield. And the god complained that Wigan never even offered him anything. He finally requested Wigan to once in a while sacrifice a chicken. As the smell of roasting chicken wafted upwards, Kabuniyan was pleased (Coronel 1967).

In another story, another Wigan blocked the river water with his hip bag to produce

Manuvu – Western Davao, eastern Cotabato. Outsiders often refer to the Manuvu as Bagobo, but they themselves do not.

Bukidnon – Bukidnon

Subanon – Zamboanga Peninsula

Mandaya (or *Mansaka*) – Davao del Norte, northern and eastern part

Bagobo – Davao Gulf, west and northwest

Tiruray – Cotabato, southern part

Muslim Groups:

Maranaw – Lanao del Sur, around Lake Lanao

Magindanaw – Cotabato, northeastern part

Yakan – Basilan Island, south of Zamboanga

Tausug; *Samal*; *Badjao* – Sulu Archipelago

NOTE: Ethnic simply means a cultural community, which means therefore that everyone is ethnic, including the scavengers at Smokey Mountain and the socialists sipping a martini.

In ancient Bisayas the universe was conceived of as having seven layers with the earth we live in as the middle layer.



a flood. But as the water rose higher and higher, he feared that it would splash against the sky's layer! For sure his father in the sky would give him a scolding! (Lorrin undated).

Journeys to the Sky

Earth was indeed so near the sky that terrestrials could get to the skyworld by jumping up from a high mountain. A story from Misamis Oriental recounts how earth people could climb up to the sky from the top of a tall tree and communicate with the

deity anytime they wished. Among the Manobo, after the sky had risen, the deity built a stair which earthlings could climb to reach the sky. So they would not be famished on the way, the deity even provided

food on some of the rungs. Unfortunately, a gross climber, Puhak by name and a Filipino (presumably a Christian), defecated, and the stairs disappeared (Maquiso 1977).

For the ascent or descent of mortals they fancied, the gods let down a vine, a rope, a rattan basket. On the western side of the Cordilleras live the Tinggian who are first cousins of the Ilocanos. Known for blankets decorated with concentric circles and horses, they ought to be known too for their highly developed, imaginative tales. They relate how the pretty Aponibolinayen was pulled up by a vine that curled mysteriously around her body and deposited her in the yard of the sun god (Cole 1916). Gaygayoma, a star maiden, lowered a basket

from heaven to fetch a mortal, Aponitolau, whom she wished to marry —

in spite of his being married. He eventually had a child by the star goddess and spent half of the year in the skyworld and the other half on earth with his mortal wife and child — much like some ordinary Filipino husbands do. In turn, a homesick Bagobo, Wari, who had no taste for heaven, was also allowed to go home via the celestial basket (Cole 1916). One Ifugao goddess, Bugan, attempted to take her earthly husband to heaven by means of a rope but he had a fear of heights (Beyer 1913).

Access to the skyworld was also possible by riding a Maranao shield, a Subanon handkerchief or a heavenly spaceship. The Bukidnons speak of a spirit boat, the *salimbal*, which brought Agyu's people to the sky and afterwards back to earth to establish an earthly paradise in Nalandangan (Unabia 1986). In the last episode of the epic *Sandayo*, the *buklog* platform itself, on which the Subanon nobility were dancing and celebrating, was detached from its moorings and carried all to the sky (Resma 1983). In the state of trance that is so much a part of traditional Philippine rituals, thanks to the chanting, the dancing, the drinking and the betel nut chewing, consciousness opens up and feels itself transported to a region of light.



Bukidnons speak of a spirit boat, the salimbal which can transport people to the skyworld without having to die.

A TRIP TO THE SKY

One of the many children of the first parents was called Lumabat. There came a time when Lumabat quarrelled with one of his sisters and was very angry with her. He said, "I will go to the sky, and never come back again."

So Lumabat started for the sky-country, and many of his other brothers and sisters went with him. A part of their journey lay over the sea, and when they had passed the sea, a rock spoke to them and said, "Where are you going?" (In the beginning, all the rocks and plants and the animals could talk with the people).

Then one boy answered the rock, "We are going to the sky-country." As soon as he had spoken, the boy turned into a rock. But his brothers and sisters went on, leaving the rock behind.

Presently a tree said, "Where are you going?"

"We are going to the sky," replied one of the girls.

Immediately the girl became a tree. Thus, all the way along the journey, if any one answered, he became a tree, or stone, or rock, according to the nature of the object that put the question.

By and by the remainder of the party reached the border of the sky. They had gone to the very end of the earth, as far as the horizon. But here they had to stop, because the horizon kept moving up and down. The sky and the earth would part, and then close together again, just like the jaws of an animal in eating. This movement of the horizon began as soon as the people reached there.

There were many young men and women, and they all tried to jump through the place where the sky and the earth parted. But the edges of the horizon were very sharp, like a *kampilan* sword, and they came together with a snap whenever anybody tried to jump through; and they cut him into two pieces. Then parts of his body became stones, or grains of sand. One after another the party tried to jump through, for nobody knew the fate of the one who went before him.

Last of all, Lumabat jumped — quick, quicker than the rest; and before the sharp edges snapped shut, he was safe in the skyworld. As he walked along, he saw many wonderful things. He saw many *kampilan* swords standing alone, and fighting without any hand to hold them. Lumabat passed by them all. Then he came to the realm of the bad dead. The realm was called *Ginokudan*.

There, in the flames, he saw many spirits with heavy misdeeds on them. The spirits with little misdeeds were not in the flames; but they lay, their bodies covered with sores, in an acid that cuts like the juice of a lemon. Lumabat went on, past them all.

Finally he reached the house of the chief Diwata and went up to the house. There he saw many *diwata* and they were all chewing betelnut. One *diwata* spat from his mouth the betelnut that he had finished chewing. When Lumabat saw the betelnut spittle coming from the mouth of the god, it looked to him like a sharp knife. The chief Diwata laid hold of Lumabat, and Lumabat thought the god held a sharp knife in his hand. But it was no knife: it was just the betelnut. Diwata rubbed the betelnut on Lumabat's belly, and with one downward stroke opened the belly, and took out Lumabat's intestines.

Then Lumabat himself became a god. He was not hungry any more, for now his intestines were gone. Yet if he wanted to eat, he had only to say, "Food, come now!" and at once all the fish were there, ready to be caught, for in the sky-country, fish do not have to be caught. And Lumabat became the greatest of all the *diwata*.

Now, when Lumabat left home with his brothers and sisters, one sister and three brothers remained behind. The brother named Wari felt sad because Lumabat had gone away. At last he decided to follow him. He crossed the sea, reached the border of the sky, which immediately began to make the opening and shutting motions. But Wari was agile, like his brother Lumabat; and he jumped quickly just like Lumabat, and got safely into heaven. Following the same path that his brother had taken, he reached the same house. And again Diwata took the betelnut, and attempted to open Wari's belly; but Wari protested, for he did not like to have his intestines pulled out. Therefore the god was angry at Wari.

Yet Wari stayed on in the house for three days. Then he went out on the platform that joined the front and back part of the gods' house, whence he could look down on the earth. He saw his village, and it made him happy to look at his fields of sugar cane and bananas, his groves of betel and coconuts. There were his bananas ripe, and all his fruits ready to be plucked. Wari gazed, and then he wanted to get back to earth again, and he began



Diwata rubbed the betelnut on Lumabat's belly and with one downward stroke took out his intestines. Lumabat would never be hungry again.

to cry; for he did not like to stay in heaven and have his intestines taken out, and he was homesick for his own village.

Now, the god was angry at Wari because he would not let him open his belly. And the god told Wari to go home, and take his dogs with him. First the god fixed some food for Wari to eat on his journey. Then he took meadow-grass, and tied the long blades together, making a line long enough to reach down to earth. He tied Wari and the dogs to one end of the line; but before he lowered the rope, he said to Wari, "Do not eat while you are up in the air, for if you eat, it will set your dogs to quarrelling. If I hear the sound of dogs fighting, I shall let go the rope."

But while Wari hung in the air, he got very

hungry, and, although he had been let down only about a third of the distance from heaven to earth, he took some of his food and ate it. Immediately the dogs began to fight. When Diwata in the sky heard the noise he dropped the rope of meadow-grass. Then Wari fell down, down; but he did not strike the ground, for he was caught in the branches of the tree called *lanipo*. It was a tall tree, and Wari could not get down. He began to utter cries; and all night he kept crying, "Aro-o-oo-i!" Later on he could go down because he had been changed into a *kulago* bird. At night when you hear the call of the *kulago* bird you know it is the voice of Wari. The *kulago* bird has all sorts of feathers, of all kinds of birds and chickens; it has the hair of all animals and the hair of man.

— LAURA WATSON BENEDICT (1916)

THE QUARRELS OF THE SUN AND THE MOON



1. It is said that in the older time the sun and the moon were married. One day the moon had to attend to one of her household duties, some say getting water, or some, *gabi* leaves from the little farm. Before departing she crooned the children to sleep. She told her husband to watch over them but not to approach lest by the heat that radiated from his body, he might harm them. The moon then started upon her errand.

The sun who had never before been allowed to touch his babies, arose and approached their sleeping place. Filled with longing he gazed upon them and bending down, fondly kissed his children. The intense heat that issued from the sun's countenance melted them like wax. Upon perceiving this the father wept copiously and quietly betook himself to the adjoining forest in great fear.

The moon returned duly. After laying down her burden in the house she turned to where the

children slept and found only their charred and inanimate forms. The moon broke out into a loud wail, and in the wilderness of her grief called upon her husband. He gave no answer.

Finally softened by her long, loud complaints he returned to the house. At the sight of him her cries of grief and despair and rebuke redoubled. Unable to soothe his wife the sun became enraged and began to curse her.

At first the moon feared his anger and her sobs quieted. But finally breaking out into one long loud wail, she seized the burnt forms of her babies and in anguish threw them out in different directions. The crazed sun then seized the *gabi* leaves that had been brought from the farm and cast them harshly in the moon's face. Then he left the domicile.

Upon his return the sun could not find his wife. He looked for her to plead forgiveness but she heeded him not and so it is to this day that the



repentant sun follows the moon in an eternal cycle of night and day. The stars stand scattered in the sable firmament, for they are the moon's discarded children that accompany her in her hasty flight from the sun. Ever and anon a shooting star breaks across her path, but that is only a messenger from the sun calling her back. But, the marks of the *gabi* leaves still upon her face, the moon unheeding speeds on in her never-ending flight, her starry train accompanying her to the dawn and on to the sunset in one eternal flight. — JOHN GARVAN, 1928

2. According to another tale the stars had quite a different origin. In the beginning of things there was only one great star, who was like a man in

appearance. He sought to usurp the place of the sun and the result was a conflict in which the latter was victorious. He cut his rival into small pieces and scattered them over the whole sky as a woman sows rice.

3. The phases of the moon are caused by her putting on or taking off her garments. When the moon is full she is thought to be entirely naked.

4. A great lake exists in the sky and it is the spray from its waves which falls to the earth as rain. When angered the spirits sometimes break the banks of this lake and allow torrents of water to fall on the earth below. — FAY-COOPER COLE, 1913

The Hole in the Sky



he idea of a hole-in-the-sky, often a subject of lectures of a famous Philippine Lady, may not, after all be so ridiculous. Many peoples have stories about how celestials discover the earth — sometimes through a hole on the floor of the sky. It always presages a descent.

The god Kabigat reported to his heavenly father in Hudog (his home in the skyworld) that he had seen in the earthworld “a spring and very good and beautiful trees for timber with which to make houses.” Consequently he had a yearning to live in such a delightful place (Beyer 1913).

Another myth, a Bisayan one, relates that the earth people were originally sky dwellers who had grown weary with life up there with its monotonous diet of meat and wardrobe of warm feather clothes. In those times no one lived on earth, all people lived in heaven. One day a skilled hunter called Ukunirot shot a bird with his bow and arrow with such velocity that the arrow went clear through the bird’s body. It pierced the ground deeply. With great effort Ukunirot pulled out the arrow and in so doing created a hole on the sky floor. He looked through the hole and, lo and behold, saw the attractive green earth and the shining waters below. Captivated by the sight he called his friends to look (Demetrio 1972).

Plucking all the bird’s feathers they fashioned a rope. The heavenly inhabitants descended to earth, all except a fat woman who got stuck in the hole in the sky. She became the moon.

Similarly, Mindanao groups such as the Bukidnon believe that the sky “has a hole.” Through this hole Magbabaya, the supreme Diwata, and all the other *diwatas* can see the entire universe and reach out to earth people (Unabia 1986).

Gaspar de San Agustin’s 1600’s tale, another hole-in-the-sky story, is about the first inhabitant on earth, a female from the skyworld. It goes: One day the daughter of the chief of the sky fell ill. The shaman of the sky said, “The cure lies in the roots of the wild *balete* tree. Dig around it and let her arms touch the roots.”

So they dug deeply around the root of the heavenly *balete* and placed the sick girl in the ditch. Suddenly the girl fell through the hole in the sky. Below the sky was a lake of the earth. Wild ducks swimming on it saw the sick girl falling from the sky. They swam close together and caught her lightly on their backs and there she rested.

But the girl had nowhere to stay. Worried, the wild ducks asked the big turtle, who asked the toad, to dive down and bring up soil from the roots of a tree growing in the primordial waters. The toad dove deep into the ocean and came up with sand in his mouth. Over the big turtle's shell the soil was spread. It grew until it became Bohol island and the heavenly chief's daughter became the first Boholano (Kirtley 1957).

If the inhabitants of the skyworld were discovering earth through accidentally created peepholes, in the same way the earthly inhabitants were discovering the existence of the underworld through a hole on the earth floor, as in the following tale of a huge sweet potato.

One day two brothers called Timungan went to their swidden garden to dig for tubers. One of them happened upon an unusually large one. He kept digging around it until he had made quite a deep hole. Finally he pried up the sweet potato.

The two brothers peeped down the hole. They suddenly realized that they were looking down into the underworld. There was a large house below and a feast with many people was obviously going on. *Ganza* or gong music filled the air. The two brothers decided to join the festivities. Tying one end of the rope to a large tree they lowered themselves down to the underworld.

In the big house the uninvited guests helped themselves to the food. While the brothers were eating, however, they noticed that the underworld people had tails. One of them looked at the intruders and said to his companion, "They must be good to eat. Let's get them."

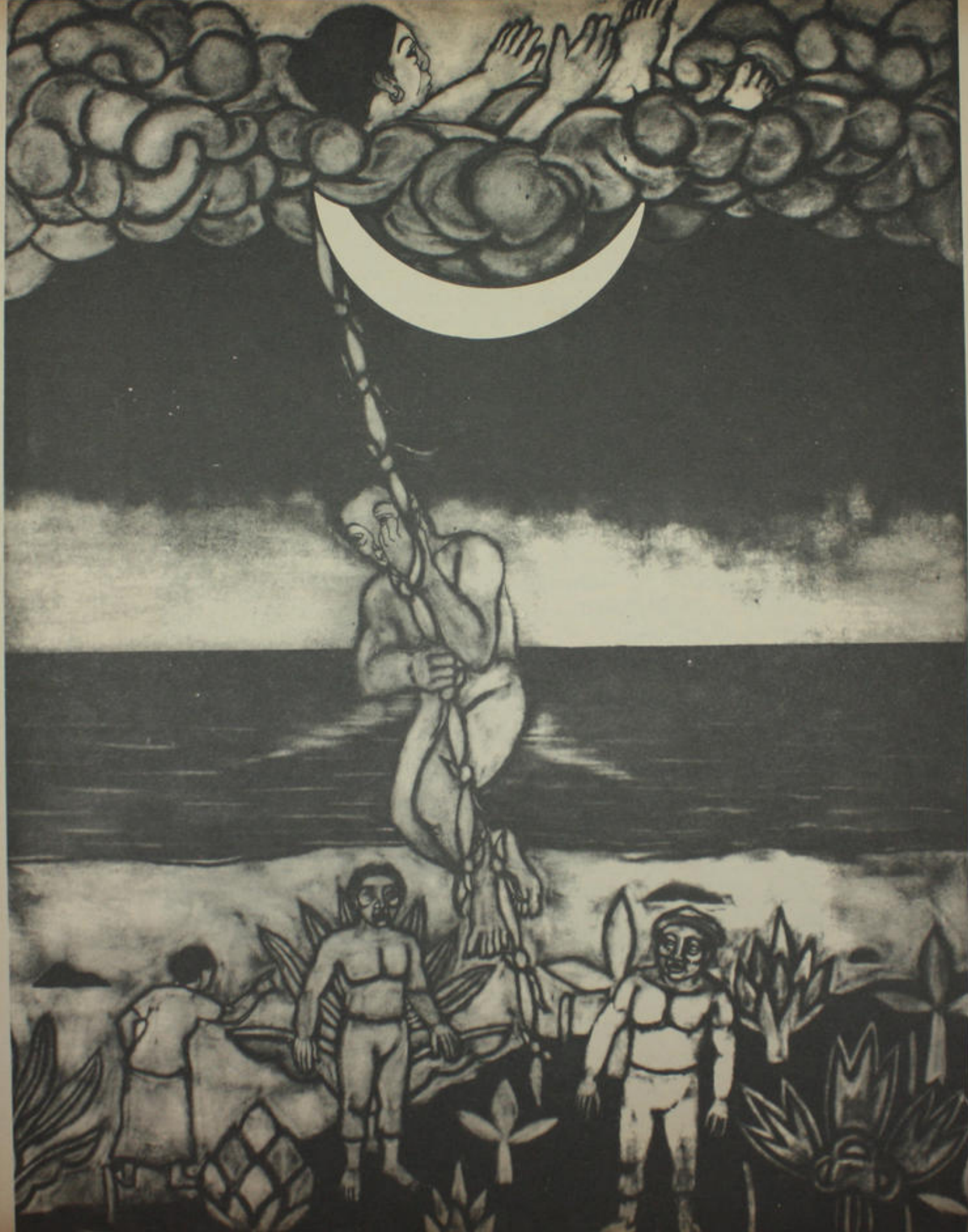
This frightened the brothers. They tried to steal out through the windows but Masiken, the lord of the underworld, gave chase and caught the brothers.

To keep from being eaten one of the Timungan said, "Don't kill us and if you wish I'll marry your daughter." This pleased the old man of the underworld. He ordered the marriage celebrated at once. A hog was butchered and a shaman was called to perform the ceremony.

Sometime after the wedding the old man Masiken took his Timungan son-in-law on a hunting trip. On the way they saw a hog scratching itself on one of the four posts holding up the earth from the underworld. The old man explained that this was causing an earthquake on the earth above.

The hunters arrived in the forest but the son-in-law stayed on the trail. Everyone stalked game. Soon the hunters came upon an old carabao. The carabao ran past the Timungan. When he tried to catch it with his rope he realized that it was not a carabao at all but an old woman, his own mother. Horrified, he let her escape.

The heavenly inhabitants descended to earth except one fat woman who got stuck in the hole and became the moon.



The hunters returned breathless from the chase. Angry with the Timungan for having let the carabao go they ran after the beast and caught it.

"Don't kill that carabao," begged the Timungan. "It's not really a carabao but an old woman." "What of it?" asked the hunters. "It's not good to eat earth people," the Timungan said. "If you don't like eating people," the underworld dwellers said, "then you'd better get back to earth where you belong." "We better do," said the Timungan.

Even the old man Masiken consented. He and his men went with the brothers to where the rope was still hanging. All of them climbed up the rope to the surface of the earth. The first thing they noticed was that it was dark on earth. This was because the sun had been shining in the underworld. But it soon came up again.

When the old man and his followers were about to go back to the underworld they asked for some rope to make a net so that they could snare people. "I'll give you a rope, but don't use it to catch people," pleaded the Timungan brothers.

"Then give us chickens once in so often," said Masiken, "And we won't have to catch people for meat." And ever since then people have sacrificed animals to pacify the appetites of the gods of the underworld (Mallari-Wilson 1958).

These tales may seem fantastic and yet they uncannily presage the hole in the ozone layer over Antarctica that scientists have discovered. Should the hole widen the sun's rays will intensify and scorch the earth as when the sky was low. For those who don't learn, history repeats itself.

IFUGAO

THE MYTH OF THE DIVIDED CHILD

A god named Dumagid, whose home is in one of the lower regions of the sky, came down to Benguet and lived among the people. He taught the people many things, and often went hunting with them in the forest. But one day, when he was out in the woods alone, he met a beautiful girl by the name of Dugai with whom he fell in love, and they were married. A son was born to them, and they named him Ovug.

Shortly after Dumagid informed the people that he must return to the skyworld to report to the chief deity, Kabigat, but that he would soon come down again to the earthworld. The people demanded that he take his wife with him, and that they leave their son as security for their return. Dumagid told Dugai that the path was so hot that she might die, but this the people would not believe.

Dumagid and Dugai started out, but as they approached the sun it grew so hot that Dugai died. Dumagid returned her body to the earth, and

went on to his home in the sky.

Later Dumagid came back to the earth, in company with the god Bangan and told the people that he must take his son Ovug to the skyworld. This the people refused to allow him to do, so Dumagid took a knife and divided his son Ovug into equal parts by cutting him straight down the middle. When Dumagid had done this, he told the people to keep one half and make a new boy out of it. The other half Dumagid took with him to the skyworld and reanimated.

He looked down to the earthworld and saw that the half of his son there was becoming decayed because the people had not given it new life. So he came down with the boy he had made, and made another beautiful boy out of the decayed half. Then he made the two boys stand before the astonished people.

To their greater astonishment, Dumagid asked the boy he had made in the skyworld to talk. He



spoke very loud, like sharp thunder, so that the people were frightened almost to death. Then Dumagid asked the other boy to talk, and he spoke low, like the rolling thunder. Then the first boy went up to the skyworld whirling like fire,

and thundered there. And it is believed that this is the origin of the lightning and the sharp thunder that comes after; and it is also believed that the low thunder is the voice of the second boy, or the one made on earth.

- H. OTLEY BEYER (1913)



Architecture of the Middeworld



he earth is seen sometimes to be composed of seven layers with another seven layers of heaven above and seven other layers of underworld below. Other times it is the middle layer of a total seven layers of universe. This is the thinking of the Palawanos who believe the world to be composed of seven plates, one on top of the other with a center pole connecting them. Man lives in the middle or fourth plate (Macdonald 1988).

"Middeworld" is how the Ifugaos refer to the earth. They believe that the universe is a globe. If you slice it horizontally like a salami, the earthworld which is the middle one would be the broadest in circumference. The layers of the skyworld and the underworld grow successively smaller as they approach the zenith and nadir of the celestial globe (Beyer 1913).

The Bukidnon earth is shaped like a saucer, the sky in the same form but with the concavity towards the earth. The Magbabaya or gods of the universe live at the points where the concavities meet.

When pre-modern people speak of "the world" it is usually understood to mean their native soil, place or island. It also includes everything that earth carries on its lap — the trees, the stones, the rocks, the springs, the rivers, the lakes, the mountains, the sky, the caves, the flowers, and so on — everything, in other words, that goes into making up a place (Demetrio 1978).

All the early peoples conceived of the earth as flat. One Cordillera myth complains that the forests of earth did not have as many animals as before. "Most of them had gone beyond, fallen into the great pit at the end of the world" (Cawed 1972). The earth was originally bare, without any sign of (human) life. It was only a rich hunting ground for the people of the upperworld who loved to explore and hunt wild animals as a hobby. But humans did not enjoy hunting as the world was flat (Lorrin undated).

*Most of the animals
had gone beyond, fallen
unto the great pit at the
end of the world.*

The Mandayas believe that once the earth was flat but was pressed into mountains by a mythical woman. It has always rested on the back of a great eel whose movements cause earthquakes. Sometimes crabs and other small animals annoy it until, in its rage, the eel attempts to reach them, then the earth is shaken so violently that whole mountains are thrown into the sea (Cole 1956).

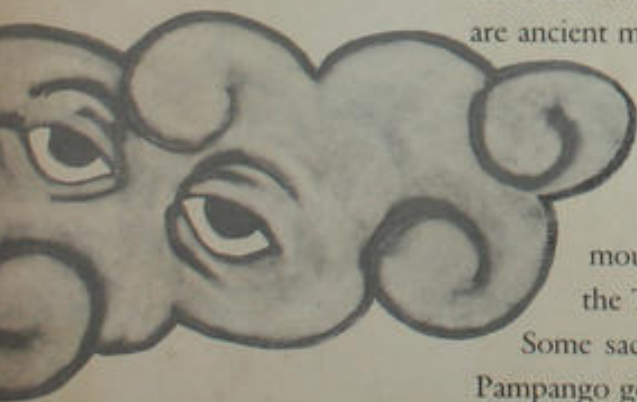
Another belief is the existence of posts supporting the earth. In a tale from the Cordillera four huge posts which hold up the earth from the underworld can be seen in the land of Masiken, god of the underworld. A great hog scratching itself on one of the posts causes an earthquake above (Mallari-Wilson 1958). An Eastern Mindanao version tells us that Makalindung ("The Shaker"), its creator, set the world on posts (just like building a *bahay kubo*) with one post at the center. In this central post Makalindung lives in company with a python. Whenever he is displeased he shakes the post as a warning and produces an earthquake (Garvan 1931).

Again in the Bukidnon epic, great logs were made into pillars for the construction of the house of the hero, Agyu. The first posts planted were to be driven down and stopped only when they touched the forehead of the Intumbangol (Opeña 1979), a pair of serpent deities who support the earth from the underworld. One snake is a male and the other a female and they lie to form a cross, their mouths below the water at the point where the earth and sky meet. When the Intumbangol move they cause earthquakes; when they breathe they cause the winds; when they pant they cause violent storms. The Intumbangol do not fall down because they are held up by the great god Magbabaya (Cole 1956). These snakes represent the chaos, unruliness and purposelessness of life. Agyu has first to subdue the Intumbangol before he can construct his house which represents peace and order.

Towering over the earthworld are the mountains, the tallest of which are sacred. Because of their height, they are believed to permit easy access to the skyworld. In Panay, its inhabitants believe, are situated the *harigi ka kalibutan* (pillars of the world) which are mountains believed to support the whole structure of heaven. These "pillars" are ancient mountain sites where the *babaylan* perform their sacred rites (Magos 1986).

Many Philippine groups have situated the land of the dead on the highest mountain, for the deceased, like the living, are fond of cool places (de los Reyes 1909). Other residents of tall mountains are powerful gods and goddesses. In this connection Loarca notes that paradise too is a high mountain to some of the early tribes, a kind of Mount Olympus. According to the Tagalogs no one goes to the sky where Bathala alone dwells (Llanes 1957).

Some sacred mountains in Luzon in pre-Christian days were Arayat, home of the Pampango god, Suku. Mount Makiling was the dwelling of a fair goddess who by turns could be kind and wrathful. Volcanoes with their great craters are believed to give easy access to the underworld. Because Banahaw in the southern Tagalog region was a tall



and mighty volcano that spewed fire as recently as two centuries ago, it became the center of cults (Covar 1988). These have persisted to this day in Christianized form. Mt. Pinatubo in Zambales is where the dead Aetas go. The soul of a good dancer at a *manganito* seance goes up to Mount Pinatubo, that of a bad dancer to Mount Bangan, a small rocky hill across it (Garvan 1964).

In Mindanao, the volcano Apo was regarded as the home of the *busaw* and other dangerous spirits. They lived in an enormous house within the mountain into which the crater gave passage. Laura Watson Benedict back in 1916 wrote:

Great numbers of wild animals, reptiles, and flying creatures live on the summit of the volcano — deer, pigs, cats, dogs, civets, mice, flying lemurs, monkeys, birds, jungle fowl, snakes, and monitor lizards — all of which belong to the *busaw*. Around the edge of the crater, the prints of these animals may be seen by persons with the temerity to make the ascent (so the old men say); but the fabulous animals are invisible, except to all the *busaw*. In addition there are many "bad animals" residing in Mount Apo, that is, *busaw* in the form of beasts.



But the most powerful resident of Apo was the god Mandarangan. It is said that the summit of the mountain contained a lake whose dark waters concealed his physical body. He rewarded offerings made to him by granting sound health, valor in war, and success in the pursuit of wealth. Thus the Bagobos sacrificed frequently to him especially before the sowing of rice. On a specially constructed platform a slave was pierced with a lance and the body chopped by all present, each of whom took part of the body home so as to benefit from the god's blessing (Gloria 1987).

Part of the earthworld is the sea. It is believed to be a basin with an enormous hole on its bottom called "the navel of the sea" through which all waters descend.

One of the children of the moon, according to a creation myth is a giant crab called Tambanakaua who is so powerful that lightning flashes everytime he opens and closes his eyes. Most of the time the crab lives in a large hole in the bottom of the sea. When he is there it is high tide, when he leaves the hole the waters rush in and it is low tide (Cole 1913). When the giant crab decides to sit for a long time on that hole, a flood covers the earth.

According to the Zambals, rivers came about because Apo Mamalyari, the creator god pitied the people. Their *kaingin* would not support them anymore, they were half starving. They could not have a good catch either because game was becoming fewer and fewer. Apo Mamalyari decided to create another source of food. He stood up and urinated for 13 hours facing east then faced the west and urinated another thirteen hours. When he saw that rivers and rivulets had been formed Apo Mamalyari threw leaves of different shapes and sizes into them. They became fishes. From that time on people did not live only on hunting, gathering fruits and planting, but on fishing as well.

THE EARTHFOLK AND THE SKYFOLK EXCHANGE GIFTS

Wigan and his brother decided to go hunting. Wigan untied the leader of the dogs. They entered the forest. Wigan led the dogs on, yelled encouragement. They went from hill to hill and to the other side of their mountains in the Upstream Region. They drove the quarry upward. It climbed up to the skyworld.

Said Wigan: "Our quarry, it has gone up to the skyworld. Let's follow it!"

The brothers, not noting time's passage, kept climbing upward to the skyworld. They spotted the wild pig hidden between the houses of Lidum and Hinumbian. Wigan speared the quarry.

Said Hinumbian: "Wigan, thou has destroyed one of our pigs of the skyworld!"

"It is no pig of yours!" said Wigan. "Our dogs trailed it from Kayang. The brothers carried the game to the granary of Lidum and Hinumbian. They spread out a mat, laid the pig on it and opened it up. Wigan shared the meat with the skyworld people.

Lidum of the skyworld and Hinumbian of the skyworld got their share. Cutting the meat into small pieces they mixed it with blood and rice. Said Lidum: "Come Wigan, let us all eat."

Said Wigan: "I will not eat with you — it is uncooked!"

They put their part of the meat in their backbaskets, and descended to the earthworld. Coming on a bamboo thicket, they drew their bolos, slashed off bamboos. Taking one node they used it for cooking rice, they took another node and used it for cooking meat. They worked a fire saw (made fire by friction). They made a fire, bringing in dry bamboo twigs for fuel. After a while the rice and the meat were cooked. Attracted by the delicious smell the children of Lidum and Hinumbian, who had trailed Wigan and his brother, gathered around.

Said Wigan: "Come, you children, let us eat." The children ate heartily. There were a lot of meat and rice left over. "Here take this home so that Lidum and Hinumbian can eat food that is not raw."

The children went back to the skyworld with the food and gave it to Lidum and Hinumbian. "What is that swelled-up cooked rice?" they asked. They tasted the food. The cooked rice tasted like cooked rice and the meat tasted like meat. "Where are Wigan and his brother so that

we can exchange with them?"

They shouted to Wigan: "Come on back, Wigan!"

Wigan climbed back up and said to Hinumbian: "What is it you say?"

"What did you use to swell up the meat and rice you gave us?"

"What will you exchange for it?"

"Our jewels of the skyworld."

Said Wigan: "We have jewels, but we took them off because we went hunting."

"What do you want?" said Hinumbian. "What about the seed of our mung beans of the skyworld?"

Wigan replied: "We have cowpeas of good variety."

"What do you want then?" said Hinumbian. "Shall we give you our rice of the skyworld in exchange?"

Wigan agreed: "Your rice of the skyworld is good indeed." They went to the granary and Hinumbian took out two bundles of seed rice. Wigan made a fire in the houseground of the gods. "So much for that. Now we will return."

Wigan took the seed rice and descended to the earthworld.

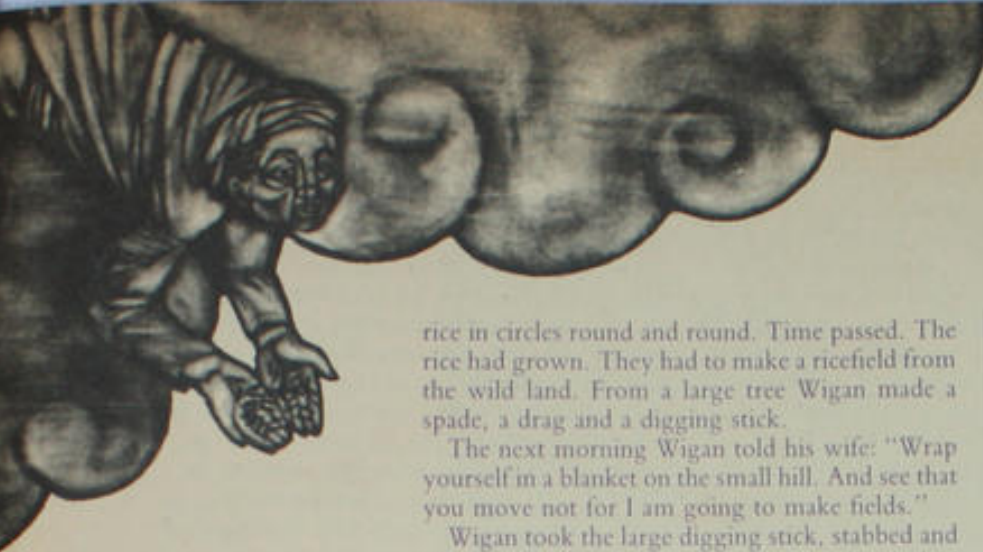
Hinumbian and Lidum carried the fire into the house and put it on the floor. The floor caught fire. Lidum shouted, "Return, Wigan. Take back your fire for it is eating the house!"

Wigan came back, took water to the house of the skygod and quenched the fire. He built them a fire place, a fire place rack for wood, set three stones for holding the pot, and cautioned them about the use of fire.

Lidum and Hinumbian advised Wigan, "Descend to your village. When you arrive there store the rice in your granary. When you see that the leaves have started, plant the rice. Look for swampy ground and make it level. Plant the rice in circles round and round. But first you must perform the welfare rites."

Time passed. They saw that the leaves of the seeds had sprouted again. They brewed rice wine, added water to it and waited one day. They sacrificed a chicken and the omen was good which meant that the plants would be fruitful.

Time passed. One morning they crossed their level space at Kayang, saw the marshy place, cleaned it and levelled it. They planted the seed



rice in circles round and round. Time passed. The rice had grown. They had to make a ricefield from the wild land. From a large tree Wigan made a spade, a drag and a digging stick.

The next morning Wigan told his wife: "Wrap yourself in a blanket on the small hill. And see that you move not for I am going to make fields."

Wigan took the large digging stick, stabbed and pried and up came a perpendicular wall. He laid his spade along it and there was a straight dike. He slid his drag over the ground and it became level.

He went to another place, stabbed the stick into the ground and pried. A stone wall appeared. He laid his spade along it, and dragged his drag over

the ground. Wigan worked fast. In no time at all he saw his cultivated area. The dikes (terraces) rose one above the other. He counted and there were eight of them.

Bugan moved. Wigan stabbed the digging stick and nothing happened. He hurried to other wild land, stabbed down the digging stick repeatedly but only turned a small plot.

He ran to Bugan, "How is this, you promised not to move so that I quickly redeem the waste land, and there you have moved!"

Bugan said there were enough terraces. "There are our children and they will add to the ricefields."

- ROY FRANKLIN BARTON (1955)



Rice, once exclusive food of the gods, is exchanged with earth fire with which to cook it.

The setting of myths is "in the first times", a golden age before the flood, before the world came to be what it is now. There was no need to work, one did not get hungry, nor fatigued, nor get sick and die. About myth-time, H. Otley Beyer writes: "People were demigods whose life was a happy one and their country a sort of garden of Eden. To obtain rice all that was needed was to cut down a stalk of bamboo which was plentiful, and split open the joints which were filled with hulled rice ready to cook. Stalks of sugar cane were filled with *bubud* (the Ifugao rice liquor) and needed only to be tapped to furnish a most refreshing drink. The river was full of fish and the forests were filled with deer and wild hogs" (1913). When people needed meat the animal would offer a shank and allow them to cut what was needed (Iturralde 1973).

Rice grew everywhere, one didn't have to plant it, goes another myth. They were so large that one grain was enough to make a potful. As soon as each grain was ripe, it just fell down and rolled into the nearest granary. During harvest time grains of rice kept rolling about like so many tennis balls waiting to be allowed into one's storehouse (Mallari-Wilson, 1958). To clear a field one merely had to order the axes and the bolos and they would, while the farmer was napping, clear a whole forest (Cole 1956). Fruits grew low enough for everybody to be within reach of the branches (Raats 1969).

People lived in close companionship with nature. Rocks and plants could talk. Little distinction could be made between the real and the unreal and man lived in a strangely and beautifully animated world where marvels were accepted as true. Life had no stable form yet and a being could change from one form of existence to another such as from hairy monster to human to bird (Birkemeyer 1979). When people aged they merely changed their skins, like a snake, and were young again. If they had to die they always resurrected. Nor was there a demarcation line between the human and the divine — the gods and goddesses had human forms and led mostly human lives. If they were good enough, men could aspire to become gods.

The sky was within calling distance of the earth. "Their long bamboo ladders leaned at the edge of the skyworld and they could go up and down," writes E. Arsenio Manuel (1990) of myth time. "Earth people could talk personally to the deities to protect them and to attend to their simple daily problems." And gods even went down to help the people with their tasks and settle their disputes. (In turn, deities also asked the advice of earthlings. In a Bontok story a mortal known for his wisdom in settling village disputes was invited to the skyworld to mediate in the rivalry between two deities). As a consequence there were many mixed marriages, but the cultural difference between skyworld and earthworld being so vast, all ended up unhappily.

The golden age, the unbelievable rapport between deities and men, had to come to an end. A wrongdoing occasions it: the sky was scolded, a forbidden orange eaten, or a prohibited glance taken at axes and bolos working magically by themselves. Offended, the gods retreat to a heaven high above, beyond the reach of mortals. They cease to take part in people's affairs and become what scholars term the "idle gods".

Stories of a Paradise Lost abound all over the world. One possible explanation is that seen from a certain perspective, the foraging or hunting-gathering way of life is idyllic indeed. Studies of the few such peoples left today in the Philippines, in Southeast Asia, in Australia, in Africa suggest that they are able to gather all the food they need within a few hours each day. On occasion they hunt large game, but their daily diet consists of nuts, seeds, berries, and tubers that grow wild. Even in the hot deserts of Africa, there are always some nourishing animals and plants that need not be planted. Since land is not privately owned, bands can hunt and gather food anywhere (Sahlins 1972).

Where agriculture emerges, land is broken up into parcels that are owned by individuals or families. Wars over land appear; so does poverty. Even among Philippine groups that were never colonized by Spain but have depended on wet rice cultivation, society has been divided into classes: some with plenty of land, others with none. Looking back into the distant past, dim memories of a foraging way of life will seem golden indeed. Then there was food for everybody since one didn't have to own a piece of land to make a living. Though it is unlikely that rice, which requires care in artificial ponds, grew everywhere in a foraging society, stories about its universal abundance may have been added by the poor of a society where abundance was confined to a few.

After the fall came another catastrophe: a giant flood. Stories of a deluge are widespread all over the world. The Philippines alone has 63 flood myths collected from all over Luzon, Bisayas, and Mindanao (José 1974). This simply means that the deluge story is a very old one, for the wider the distribution and the more its variations the older a myth is. Without doubt some of our flood myths date to a time before Christ.

The Mangyans of Mindoro are the one group that has retained the ancient writing system which they use when they carve love poems on bamboo. They believe that there have been eight great floods to date. Another is impending unless men change their ways. According to one version all of mankind died in the first flood and god had to make it anew. He created one man, cut him up and scattered the pieces abroad. From the feet came the yams (*ubi*), from the fingers the banana, from the fat of the abdomen the cotton tree, from the intestines the squash. From the flesh came the rice (Iturralde 1973).

The flood is usually preceded by a terrible drought

where there is no more water. In the Palawan version three people have a dream that tells them that the waters will return. They must tell this to the world and advise the people to go up to the mountains. The dream also directs them to go to the ends of the world, there to pierce the belly or the claws of a huge crab who has stored all the water of the sea in its left claw and all the sweet water in its right. After the water has jetted out, they should flee to escape being overwhelmed by the tide. Those who disbelieve the dream and do not go up the mountain are drowned in the flood. They become the fishes of the sea as do also their torches and the rafters of their houses (Macdonald 1988).

The deluge is usually seen as a punishment for the moral decay of the world. It is seen by some groups as a punishment for incest, for after the creation no incest was to be tolerated anymore. The flood is a punishment for those who do not recognize the great god when he comes down and mingles among them as a common mortal (Jocano 1969), or do not share the fruits of the hunt, or no longer set traps for him. (Macdonald 1988).

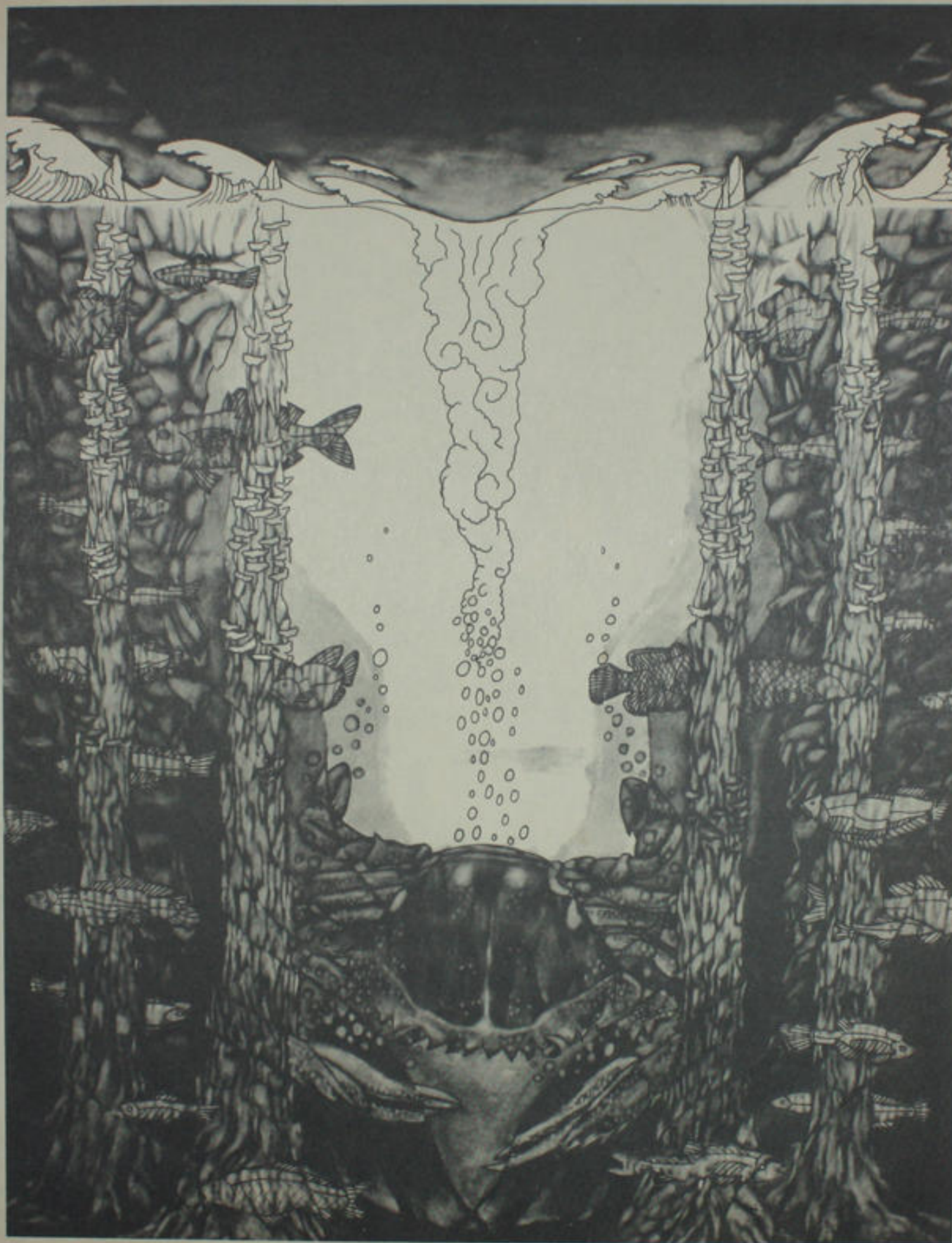
In some Philippine myths however the flood is sometimes intended to benefit the human race (Jose 1974). One improvement is the creation by the flood of mountains (in a world that is conceived of as flat) so that it would not be so difficult to hunt the deer and the pigs who are notoriously poor climbers (Cole 1916). Another perceived benefit is the annihilation of old people all of whom refuse to yield their space by rejecting death (Moss 1924).

The flood myth symbolizes rebirth. It repeats the birth of the world at the moment of creation. A return to the original state renews the exhausted forces and energies of the entire universe, for an aging race is wiped out and is replaced by a new generation.

Comes the inevitable question: why do widely scattered peoples all over the world have stories about a giant flood? Best known, of course, is the biblical account of Noah and his ark. For centuries, Westerners took the biblical narrative literally and believed that at one time a universal flood had engulfed the world. However, during the 19th century, because of skepticism about the Bible as a historical document, scholars looked at the various stories all over the world as memories of local floods. A third version came in during the 1960s. Immanuel Velikovsky (1950) had the novel idea that this flood, like the other calamities described in Exodus, may have been brought about by near collision with a giant comet that fortunately veered away and was trapped by the sun as a new planet, Venus. Hence stories in mountainous regions, like the Cordillera, of waters climbing the peaks. Both Velikovsky's enemies and partisans have impressive scientific credentials and come from a wide range of disciplines. Whatever the final verdict on him may be, the point is that local flood stories antedate Christian influence.

*When people aged
they merely changed
their skins like a snake,
and were young again.*





THE DELUGE

A giant crab is ordered by Lumawig to sit on the hole into which the waters of the world descend and causes a flood.

In the beginning the face of the earth was utterly desolate, a concave surface with a pit in the center into which the flowing waters drained. The water overseer of the god Lumawig was a giant crab, Gaki.

The people were nomads. They hunted animals for food. Often the hunters got lost, separated from each other and their families because of the absence of landmarks. To communicate with one another, the hunters resorted to shouting which disturbed Lumawig's slumber.

Disgusted with his noisy subjects Lumawig decided to create a new generation deserving of a more beautiful world. He ordered the giant crab Gaki to plug the hole, which drained the waters, with his body. The earth was flooded. Two mountains rose from the deluge, Polis and Calawitan.

As he had planned, Lumawig lifted a pair of lifeless bodies from the flood waters. He placed Gatan, the male, on top of Mount Polis. Bangan the female, he placed on Mount Calawitan.

In the night Gatan was awakened by piercing cold. He found himself on a mountain top above the deluge. All memory of his life before the flood had been erased. He saw a flickering light in the distance which meant another living being. He waited for dawn.

While searching for food on top of the mountain the next morning Gatan found a raft floating. On the right side of the raft was tied a dog, while perched on the left was a rooster.

Losing no time, Gatan sailed in the direction of the light he had observed the night before. Whenever the raft veered to the right the dog barked and Gatan would correct the drift. Whenever the raft was swept to the left, the rooster crowed and Gatan steered it on course. Thus, mysteriously guided by Lumawig, Gatan landed on Mount Calawitan.

Scouting the area, Gatan came upon a pit of live embers. Hanging on sticks beside it were a belt and a woman's skirt. Eagerly, he searched for the woman. And to his dismay and surprise, when the woman appeared — naked — for she had been bathing, she was his sister Bangan.

The god Lumawig however was for the re-peopleing of the earth and approved their union. He ordered the crab Gaki to crawl out and unplug the waterhole. And from the receding water appeared a new world countenanced with hills, valleys, rivers and mountains, which are today's guiding landmarks. As for vegetation Lumawig plucked from his face a knot of beard, and scattered it on the face of the earth to become plants.

— GREGORIO L. PADUA (1962)

THE DEPARTURE OF THE GODS

A long time ago the creator god travelled upstream with his household and their implements and animals. They settled near the river in Buntuk, in a house that was a boulder or a stone. The god fashioned three people, moulding them like pottery on the riverbank. But no matter how the god tried one of them could not be given breath or soul. And so the god decided to dismember the body. He planted the head and it became the coconut. He planted the legs which became banana plants. He planted the arms which became betel palms and sugar cane, and the hands and the

feet which became yams and sweet potatoes. These became the food for the first couple.

When the god was about to take the two people to his house across the river, a grasshopper began to chirp. The god was dismayed by the sound which was a bad omen for him and his creatures. (The Kalinga today point to the stone across the river which was split in two when the god speared the grasshopper).

The first man and woman lived with the god in his house. They had no children for they did not know how to copulate. When the god observed

for a long time that the woman did not bear a child, he secretly told them what to do. The woman became pregnant. With the years the couple had two sons and one daughter.

There was something else the god did. He piled boulders one upon the other and called it a ladder. The purpose was for the first people and their descendants to climb up to the skyworld and live a life of total bliss. When the ladder was finished it reached the sky. The creator god decided to bring up one woman first. He blindfolded her with a piece of barkcloth and told her not to remove it. The woman carried her child on her back as they climbed. When they were halfway up the wind blew so hard that it lifted the cloth from the woman's eyes. She looked down and panicked. She screamed and the ladder collapsed. (These are the big stones now scattered in Buntuk).

The first couple's family having by now multiplied had settled around the god's residence. After the ladder fiasco, the first couple too had decided to move out of the god's house. The gods were very disappointed. It was the first step in the separation of the gods and the people.

Every night sweet music coming from the house of the god could be heard. The people built a scaffold around the house of stone and sat on the rungs so that they might better enjoy the music. The people took turns listening at night especially when there was a moon. They could hear the sweet melodious music of the long flute, the short flute, the bamboo harp and the other native instruments. Sometimes they borrowed the instruments to produce their own music. The love relationship between the gods and men, although not as close as in the beginning, lasted for some time. During the night the people would also hear the gods borrowing their pestles from under their houses just like mortal Kalingas. And always before dawn the pestles would have been slid quietly back.

One fateful night a rascal from across the river, bored from listening to the playing of the eternal music of the bamboo harps and the long and short flutes and the singing of the epic stories said, "As for me, I'd prefer a virgin vulva anytime to this!"

The gods were greatly offended. There was total silence inside the house of stone. After a while the creator god said, "I think you are tired of us already so we might as well leave." But one of the gods offered the people a second chance. They were admonished, however not to put into their mouths the live *palilong* fish that they caught in the river in front of the gods' house. "And

cover yourselves when you come up," they warned. (In order to catch fish people had to dive into the underwater caves and frequent trips could be avoided if extra fish were held in the mouth by the head behind the gills. It was all normal and the men removed their g-strings when they dived. They were not being indecent but the operation turned out to be offensive to the gods).

Another man who was faithful to the gods was curious to see what was in the hollow of the house of stone. He begged entrance from the family of the creator god. The man was allowed to peep from the entrance. He was aghast to behold rows of large precious heirloom jars and shelves of porcelain bowls. (The great wealth symbolized, with the music, the complete bliss to which the gods had hoped to bring the people through the ladder event). They advised the man again to make it clear to the others that holding fish in their mouths offended the gods.

The very next day, however, the gods observed that the people had again disobeyed. The crass one had put as many as three fish in his mouth. "This is the end," the gods said. "Now we have to go for you do not heed us at all. You probably do not like us anymore." And among themselves they commented, "Who knows they might someday eat us too, and the flesh of people, since they eat what is uncooked."

It was the ultimate offense. For the gods it was a point of no return. Utterly disgusted and disappointed by the people's impropriety the creator god and his household decided to leave. They locked the house and changed it into solid stone as also their pig, their frying pan and other instruments. (All of these are still found frozen on the river bank — a testimony to the disastrous failure of man).

With this final act of alienation the people could not have access to good things anymore. Until then they had made only small gardens, which meant little work, for that was what the gods had told them to do. And they had plenty of rice even though the gardens were small. The god also told them to use small pots for cooking. They ate little and had much left over. But their pots had to be made bigger after the god and his household were gone.

From that time on the people no longer heard sweet music in the stone. From then on there were great changes: disease, death, smaller harvests and cooking in larger pots.

The god made stairs that reached the sky and decided to bring up one fearful woman who was blindfolded.





Divine Trees and Animals



Our ancestors shared the middleworld with animals and plants that they held in awe. Some of these were instrumental in the creation of man.

The Coconut. In the beginning there were three gods, each supreme in his realm: Bathala on earth, a snake-god in the clouds, and a winged head that travelled all over. A fight broke out between Bathala and the snake-god, resulting in the latter's death. Some time later, the winged head, who was Bathala's friend, also died. After Bathala buried the head with the earlier corpse, out sprang a new plant whose trunk resembled a snake and its leaves wings. The fruit looked like a head; it had both meat and water. It was the coconut, regarded as the Tree of Life in the tropics because of its many uses. Only then did Bathala create the first man and woman. There now was wood and leaves for the posts and walls of their house. And the nut gave a nourishing drink and delicious meat.

The Banana. So important is the banana in the lives of Filipinos that it is regarded as an ancestor. A Cordillera story recounts that once a banana and a stone were both pregnant. They competed as to who would be the first to deliver. The honor was won by the banana who became parent to the first humans. Poor stone, its foetus got stuck. This was just as well, said the banana, for its children would have been speechless. The pregnant stone can still be seen in the highlands.

The Bamboo. Really more of a grass than a tree, it has as many uses as the coconut tree. Our ancestors so identified with the plant that they located the first man and woman in its cool hollows. In one version, the woman came out first. But because she could not catch wild pigs, to help and console her, the Lord created man.

Throughout Island Southeast Asia, trees growing on rocks have been regarded as a symbol for cosmic forces (Frese and Gray 1987). The rock is earthbound, while the tree

Among the animals considered sacred were: the snake, the crocodile, the eel, the grasshopper, the cat.





The *balete* was the most sacred place of worship among the early Filipinos. Many *anitos* lived in it.

lunge skyward. The rock is compact, immobile, and permanent, while the tree, laden with sap, shoots in all directions and is ever-changing. One is passive and stable, the other active and unstable. Large ancient trees have been regarded by Filipinos as living cemeteries for depositing wooden coffins. Their obvious vitality and continuity must have symbolized the universal energy, an energy that all beings have and which not even death extinguishes. Indeed there was an afterworld which was a copy of this world, though in reverse.

Unique as a symbol and a locus for religion is the *balete* tree.

The Balete. The banyan (*Ficus benghalensis*) and its kin, the *balete* (*Ficus balete*), are looked at as horrific beings whose innumerable tunnels house dreadful spirits. While shadowy trees are generally regarded as spirit-haunted, the *balete* is in a class all by itself because of its unusual appearance. Its many prop roots hanging in the air develop into secondary trunks. A milky sap oozes out from its trunks. And its spacious canopy of leaves seems to envelop the sky. Other trees have *engkantos* who are fair-skinned and attractive spirits. Not the *balete* whose most famous occupant is an ugly, foul-smelling, long-legged giant, the *kapre*. People thus shun the *balete*'s wood for house-building, and caution their children not to play too close to it (Demetrio 1970).

And yet in India, the banyan tree has an opposite image. It is regarded as a symbol of the cosmos which grows like a tree, but in an inverted manner, burying its roots in the sky and spreading its branches over the entire earth. The branches are the ether, the air, fire, water, earth (Frese and Gray 1987). Seated under another member of the fig family, the pipal or the bo tree (*Ficus religiosa*), the Buddha finally saw the meaning of existence.

Tales about the fig tree family entered the Philippines in pre-Islamic times. The family became associated with the power of unseen forces. In lieu of a temple, the *balete* became the most sacred place of worship among early Filipinos. For this was the favorite haunt of the high god, the *diwata*. It was also the permanent dwelling of the owner or master-spirit of the *balete* whom the Warays then described as a tiny black man of evil aspect. What went on between the two spirits can only be guessed, for the tiny black man was supposed to be the *diwata*'s enemy.

Candidates who sought admission into the hallowed ranks of the shamans went to the *balete* where the *diwata* selected those that pleased him. When, under the shadowy canopy, the candidate raged and frothed, this was a sure sign of election. Losing one's senses indicated possession by the deity. The tree too was where the remains of a higher type of shaman, the *katooran*, would be reburied after it had lain for some time alongside her house. She had a higher rank than the ordinary *katalonan*, for her rituals were more efficacious and her prophecies more accurate. Out of deference to the august deceased, women passing by covered their faces with their hands, never stopping or looking up. Unfortunately, the presence of so many coffins attracted an unwanted visitor: the *asuwang* (Himes 1964).



Today the tiny black man has grown into a giant as tall as the tree. It seems, however, that the *diwata* still visits the leafy temple, for modern healers, the *albularyo* and the *mananambal*, communicate with spirits while seated among its vines and branching columns.

Among these plants have roamed equally haunted animals.

The Crocodile. A commuter between the bright shore and the shadowy water, this huge, mottled reptile so compelled respect that when it appeared, ancient Filipinos went on their knees in homage. It was seen as the special ward of an evil spirit dwelling at the bottom of the sea to whom it brought victims on the coffin-like "saddle" on its back (Pavon 1957). Whenever Tagalogs and Bisayans wanted to say something about it,

Chirino says that "they called it *numo* which means grandfather. They softly and tenderly besought it not to harm them and, to

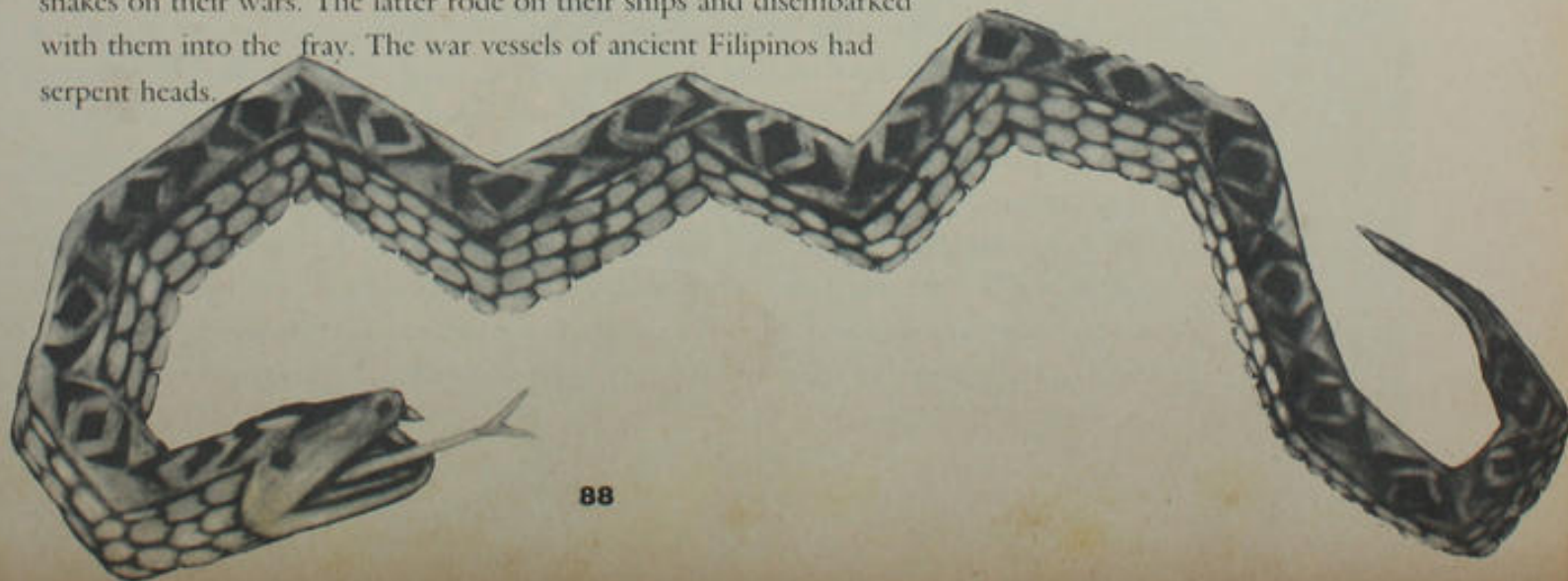
this end, offered it a part of what they carried in their boats, casting the offering into the water" (B & R, XII). Those who

killed, harmed or molested them were themselves killed or punished in a grave manner.



The Snake. Because the snake molts annually, all over the world it stands for regeneration. And since it slithers easily between the underground and the earth's surface, it seems to be a messenger of the spirits. Its phallic shape has made it also a symbol of fertility.

According to Alcina (1960), the ancient Bisayans believed that a snake could be born with some of the male children. Indeed a woman in his parish reported giving birth to a snake that was reddish from the head to the middle of its body and black up to the tip, its scales glistening. It kept following her baby and curled beside it. Although she was upset, others considered this a good omen, for great warriors were accompanied by such snakes on their wars. The latter rode on their ships and disembarked with them into the fray. The war vessels of ancient Filipinos had serpent heads.



The Eel. A gigantic eel is believed by many groups in Mindanao to be wound around the world like a belt. A ferocious crab called *kagang* bites its tail on occasion. Feeling the pain, the eel thrashes with such violence that it moves the world and produces earthquakes.



The people of Lepanto in the Cordillera feed the eels in their rivers, for these are reincarnations of their dead relatives. It may be that the eel's shape recalls that of the snake, a more universally sacred animal. Whatever the explanation may be, a consequence is that many Filipinos (like other islanders in the region) continue to shun the eel's delicious flesh although they do not know why.

The Grasshopper. Isabel Leano (1958) relates that her Ibaloi father used to say a prayer to green grasshoppers hopping into their kitchen in the evenings. The grasshopper was believed to have been sent by the ancestors to ask for fire to light their pipes.

The grasshopper was picked up and a burning charcoal thrown out with it. "Here take the burning charcoal to your superiors," he said.

A species of grasshopper, the praying mantis, is said to be the soul of the palay. When palay is gathered in heaps on the field after harvest, the rural folk put one of these insects on top of the mound to guard it. The texture and shape of their wings do recall rice husks.



The Cat. Bisayans believe that cats attract rain for the reason that lightning zigzagging across the sky resembles the shape of a cat. Some believe it even has long tusks. When lightning strikes a thick tree, it leaves behind its tusks — which people call thunder teeth. Therefore if you bathe a yowling cat, it will rain. Quiet and seemingly more pensive than the dog, the black cat is believed by some to incarnate the supreme deity; by others it is regarded as their favorite pet. While these animals were revered and tabooed because of the power of their spirit, other animals were used for sacrifice. These were the chicken, the pig and, especially in



the Cordillera, the carabao. Their blood was smeared on new houseposts to strengthen them, or on the sick to revive them. Their entrails too were useful. When carefully examined, they carried messages from the spirits, whether for good or evil.

The Moon Eaters. When the sun and the moon quarrelled, the Mandayas say, one of the offsprings left behind was a crab called *Tambanakaua* who lives in the sea. As it scuttles about, it causes the tides and high waves; when it opens its eyes lightning appears. In this connection, it's interesting to note that the Mandayas' fellow islanders, the Bukidnon, speak of a giant crab that crawled down the mountains, descended into the sea and plugged the world's navel, thus causing the Deluge. For some unknown reason, this gigantic crab always seeks to devour its mother, the moon.

The Manobos on the other hand say that *Tambanakaua* is not a crab. It is either a huge tarantula or a scorpion that attacks the moon and slowly encompasses it in a loathsome embrace. Upon seeing the first signs of darkness on the face of the moon the menfolk rush out from their houses, shout, shoot arrows towards the moon, slash at trees with their *bolos*, play the drum and gong, beat tin cans and the buttresses of trees, dance around wildly at the same time giving forth yells of defiance at the monster saying, "Let loose our moon or you will be hit by an arrow!" The women at the same time keep sticking needles or pointed sticks in the wall of the house in the direction of the enemy that is trying to envelop the moon.

If the moon does not get freed from the clutches of the tarantula or scorpion, it is believed that there will be no dawn, and in the eternal darkness that would fall upon the world, evil spirits will reign (Garvan 1931).

The Bisayans call the moon-swallowing monster by its shorter name *Bakunawa* and believe that it is a large snake or serpent. Many large serpents dwell in the heavens. Sometimes they take the moon for a bright round ball, the folk say, and play with it. The serpents swallow the moon, but finding it too big, vomit it out (Calungsod 1940-1941).

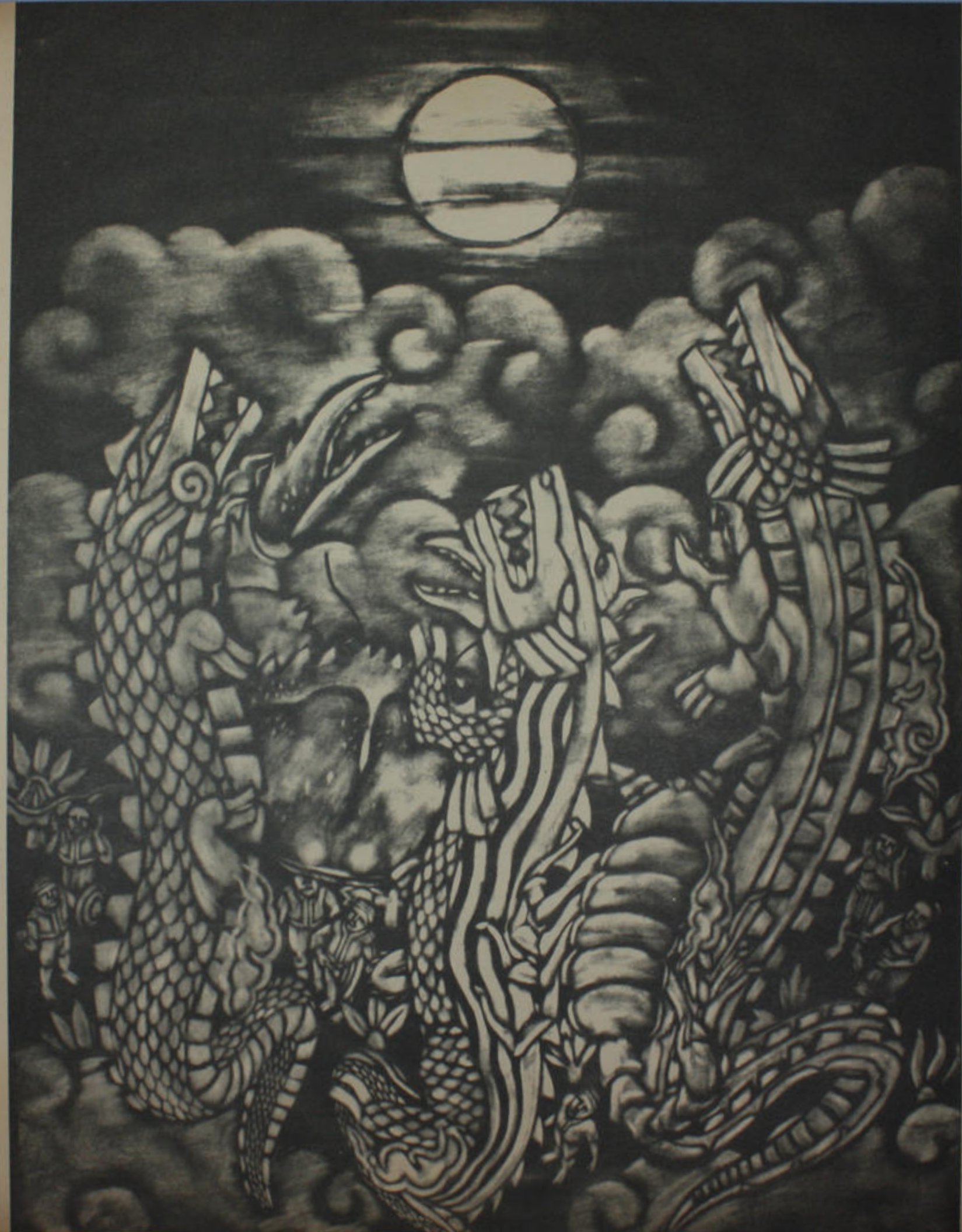
The *Bakunawa* is described by the Kiniray-a as a dragon with either a transparent or a thick-walled stomach. If a dragon with a transparent stomach happens to swallow the sun or the moon there is a partial solar or lunar eclipse, if the dragon with the thick stomach devours it there is a total eclipse. (Operiano 1940-1990)

The Bagobos believe differently. They call the creature *Minokawa* and say that it is a bird as large as the islands of Negros and Cebu.

The Maranaos, on the other hand, believe the moon swallower to be a mythical lion called *Arimoanga*. Its evil designs can be stopped by the people by rubbing their thumbnails furiously against one another or by making a noise that will deafen it. (Alvina 1940-1990).

The early Tagalogs believed that a monster called *Laho* devoured the moon (Llanes 1956) and that it was a dragon. The word *laho* today means "eclipse" but it also refers to anything that seems to have disappeared or been swallowed up without a trace (*naglaho*).

Several types of mythical monsters periodically try to swallow the moon and cause an eclipse.





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The Soul

The "soul" or spirit of a person is called:

Kaluluwa by the Tagalogs

Gimokud by the Bagobos

Makatu by the Bukidnons

Dungan by the Ilonggos when the person is alive;

"*kalag*" or "detached", "free", when he is dead.

Ikararuwa by the Ibanags

Kadkadduwa by the Ilokanos when the soul is in the physical body and *kararuwa* when it departs



aluluwa, *ikararuwa* or *kararuwa* and *inikaduwa* all come from the root word *duwa*, two. That is because the soul has two existences — one physical, where it is connected to the human body and its life, and the other spiritual, where it exists on its own. The Ilokano *kadkadduwa* further derives from *kadduwa* meaning "companion." The doubling of *kad* intensifies the nature of the companionship so that it means "a constant companion" or an "inseparable partner," therefore an attached companion of the living person (Manuel 1989).

The Ibanags of the Cagayan Valley, according to Mariano Gatan, are aware of the distinction between body (*baggi*) and soul (*ikararuwa*) but not in the Western way. In Western philosophy, the soul is the principle of life in man. Body is the matter, soul is the form. As long as body and soul are one unit, man is alive. Death is the separation of the soul from the body. The body cannot stay alive without the soul. But the soul lives without the body. Freed from the body, it ceases to experience thirst and hunger, cold and heat. As spirit, the soul is the opposite of the body which is matter.

For Filipino groups the soul is not taken as the principle of life. The phenomenon the Ibanags call *mekararuanan* (from the word *me* and *kararuwa* means "to be rid of the soul") is a state in which, because of shock, the soul leaves the body. The body is alive but it is without sense, and like a rudderless boat has no direction. For the Ibanags, the role of the soul is to give direction and wholeness to the man. But the body, as the Ibanags conceive it can stay alive independently of the soul, while the soul itself, even when separate from the body, experiences material wants and needs (Gatan 1981).

The *dungan* or soul of the Ilonggos, according to Alicia Magos (1986), is not normally seen by the human eye. Sometimes, however, it comes out of the body and takes on a visible form such as that of an insect (a housefly or a moth) or a small animal like a lizard. That is why *lolas* are always telling their children "to eat even just a little before going to bed." For if the child's *dungan* "gets hungry at night, it might go to the pot of rice in the kitchen and be mistaken for an insect." And be killed.

The *dungan* may leave the body voluntarily as when the person is asleep, according to the Bisayans. When a person can see himself in his dreams it means that his "other self" has left the physical body. Among the ancient Filipinos it was deeply impressed that a person who was asleep should not be awakened abruptly. Thus a slumbering person is first called softly and gradually louder and louder to give the soul a chance to return to the body.



The *dungan's* travel outside the body should be free from accidents. It could get trapped in a jar or be poured out with liquid from a vessel. Only when the soul has safely returned home would the owner be able to wake up. Whatever happens to the *dungan* happens to the physical body as well. It is also believed that another cause for the voluntary withdrawal of the soul is when the body is badly maltreated (Magos 1986).

According to E. Arsenio Manuel the folk believe that a soul can leave the body involuntarily too (1989). Among the people of Alaminos, Laguna, when a child gets frightened it is believed that the *kaluluwa* departs from the body. The babysitter or the mother shows her concern by calling the child's soul back, saying "*Uli, uli, kalagyo, Maria, magbalik kasa bahay.*" ("Come back, come back, namesake/soul of Maria, return to your home/body"). The child becomes normal again the moment the *kaluluwa* rejoins the body.

Another involuntary departure of the soul happens when it is lured or captured by bad spirits or *engkantu*. Among the Bisayans it may be imprisoned, they say, in a spirit cave guarded by old Tan Mulong whose spirit dog has one mammary gland and two genitals. If the imprisonment is temporary the person gets listless or sick, in which case the *dungan* has to be lured out by a skillful shaman. If it is too deep in the cave (such as in the third or fourth compartment), the person dies, says Magos. Sickness is the temporary loss of the soul. Its permanent loss is death.

The *dungan* is ethereal — something light and airy since it travels with the air or the wind. Prior to its entry and habitation of a human body, the *dungan* is believed to inhabit the region above the surface of the earth together with other *dungan*. It awaits the time when it can enter a body. The *dungan* then takes a special interest in the "unborn" being, usually a relative, which it has chosen to inhabit.

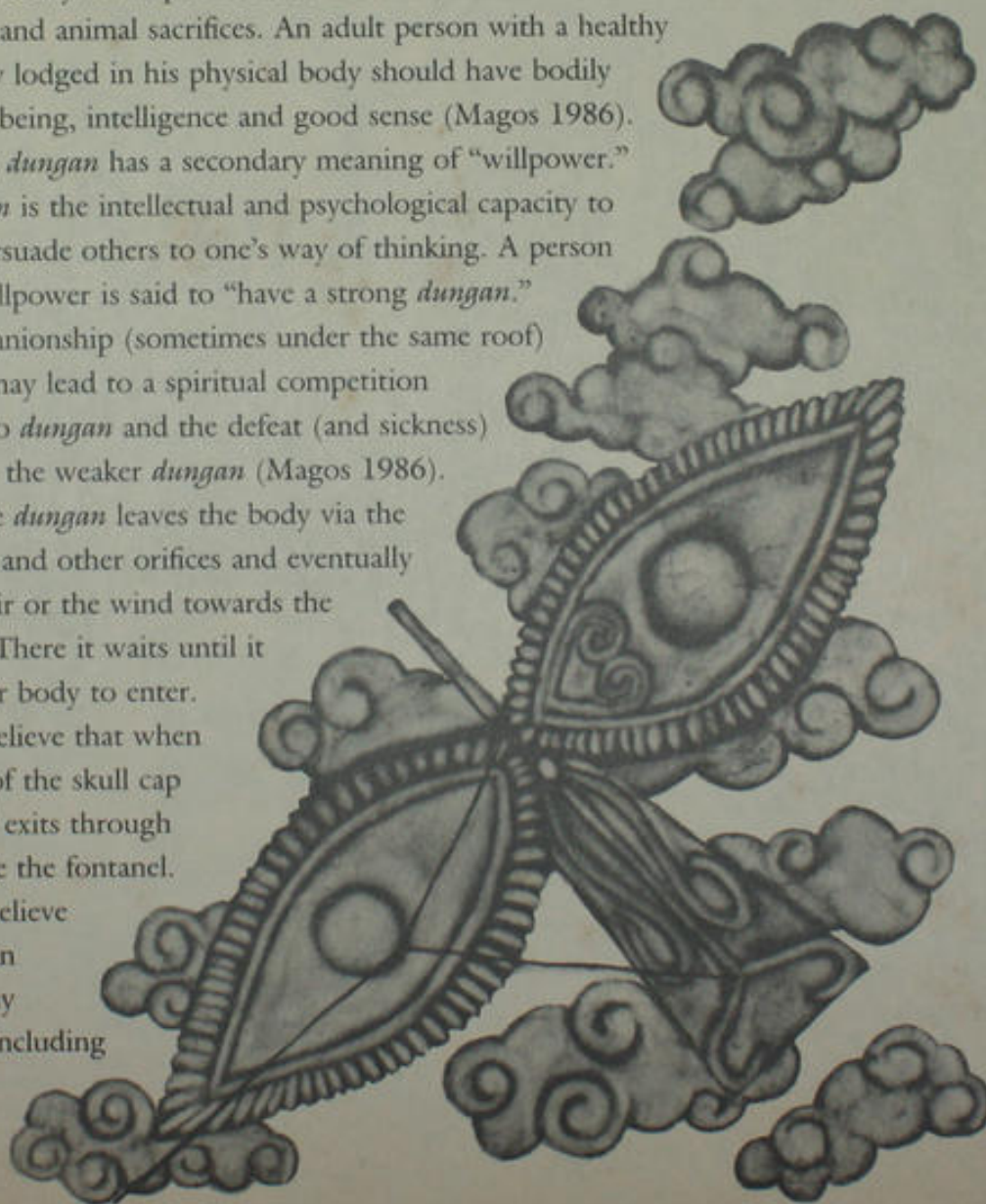
The Bukidnons believe that the soul or *makatu* already exists before a child's birth but that it is separate from its body. In a pregnancy ritual a miniature cradle is hung over the place where the pregnant mother sleeps. This is where the soul of the unborn baby is supposed to sleep before it joins the infant at birth (Unabia 1986).

The Bisayans believe that the soul or *dungan* is not located in any specific part of the body. It is also believed to grow proportionately with the person's body. It is normally weak at the baby's birth, that is why attractive babies are said to be susceptible to *usug*, that is, the unintentional transfer of disturbing vapors of a strong body to a weak one by holding, talking or looking at the weaker one (Magos 1986).

For this reason the *dungan* needs protection and nurture. Soul-nurture, the folk believe, means the performance of age-old spirit rituals many of which are still followed in the provinces today. Examples of these are birth, illness and death rituals consisting of trances, prayers and animal sacrifices. An adult person with a healthy *dungan* properly lodged in his physical body should have bodily health and well-being, intelligence and good sense (Magos 1986).

The Bisayan *dungan* has a secondary meaning of "willpower." A strong *dungan* is the intellectual and psychological capacity to dominate or persuade others to one's way of thinking. A person with a lot of willpower is said to "have a strong *dungan*." Constant companionship (sometimes under the same roof) of two people may lead to a spiritual competition between the two *dungan* and the defeat (and sickness) of the one with the weaker *dungan* (Magos 1986).

At death the *dungan* leaves the body via the nose, eyes, ears and other orifices and eventually goes with the air or the wind towards the upper regions. There it waits until it can find another body to enter. The Bagobos believe that when the throbbing of the skull cap ceases, the soul exits through what used to be the fontanel. The Negritos believe that the soul can exit through any of those parts including the big toe.





One Is Not Enough



he notion of a multiplicity of souls residing in one body is common among many peoples like the Malayo-Polynesians of which we are a member. The Bataks of Sumatra, for instance, hold that three souls inhabit the human body, as do the Tirurays of Mindanao. The Dyaks of Borneo recognize two distant souls as do the Bagobos of Davao.

Half a Dozen of Them

The Mangyans believe that besides a human soul there is a cat soul, a shrimp soul, a pig soul and a chicken soul.

The Tagbanuwa of Palawan believes that he has one "true" soul, the *kiyeraluwa*, and five secondary souls (Fox 1982). The *kiyeraluwa* is given to each infant by the god Magindusa as the nose of the child emerges from the vulva. The secondary souls appear in the child's body during the first ritual ceremony held by the parents, when the child is one or two months old.

The secondary souls of the Tagbanuwas are located in the extremities of both hands and feet and in the head just below the hairwhorl (*puyo*). The souls of the feet protect an individual while walking, from cuts, bruises and injuries to the feet. The same functions are performed by the secondary souls of the hands.

The secondary soul directly below the hairwhorl is not firmly fixed in young children. If this should move, the child would become ill. Some *shamans* specialize in rituals for moving and resetting the soul back in place on the hairwhorl of a child. This particular soul is said to have a material form much like a round white stone (Fox 1982).

The Ifugaos believe that man has two souls — one residing in the eyes and a soul residing in the breath. Illness is the withdrawal of the soul which resides in the eyes (a provisional withdrawal). Death is the withdrawal of the soul residing in the breath (a definitive withdrawal).

The Chicken Soul, the Pig Soul and the Shrimp Soul

The Hanunoo Mangyans of Mindoro believe in a plurality of souls — besides the *karaduwa tawu* (the human soul), an individual may have from two to five other souls: a *karaduwa manok* (chicken soul), a *karaduwa baboy* (pig soul), a *karaduwa kuti* (cat soul), a *karaduwa hipun* (shrimp soul). Any of these animal souls can temporarily wander away from the body (Iturralde 1973).

Multiple souls is the Mangyans' explanation for marvelous recoveries from near-fatal illnesses or accidents (the shaman was able to recall the sick man's soul before it reached the land of the dead); their dream life (one's pig soul wandered away while the person was asleep); or natural reactions to some sudden noise or movement (one's chicken soul was startled) (Iturralde 1973).

The Four Souls of the Ilokano

Four souls animate the body in early Ilokano belief. The *kararuwa* or the soul proper, is the vital element in man. It can leave only after death. It is the Ilokano name presently used for the Christian soul (Llanes 1959).

The *karkarma* or second soul, can leave the body when one is frightened; or it can be stolen from the body when the person goes to isolated places. If the soul fails to return, the owner becomes insane. Sacrifices and attendant ceremonies are held to lure back a lost *karkarma*. The Ilocano *karkarma* stands for natural vigor. *Karkarma* also stands for mind or reason. It is our counterpart of what the Greeks referred to as *psyche*.

The *aniwaas* or third soul, can leave the body during sleep and visit places which the person who owns it frequents when awake. If he wakes up he may lose his *aniwaas* and become insane.

Araria, or fourth soul, is the liberated soul of the dead. It is the soul that comes down to earth to visit its relatives and friends, asking them to pray or perform a duty it failed to do in life.

The howling of dogs announces the presence of an *araria*. It makes noise, disturbs the chickens, makes audible footsteps, breaks the door, bangs the utensils in the kitchen. If the dead was a cook he likes staying in the kitchen; if a tailor he plays with the sewing machine. If he was lame in life his footsteps betray that fact (Llanes 1956).

Left and Right

Inhabiting every individual, according to the Bagobos of Davao, are two souls called *gimokud* (Benedict 1916). The right hand *gimokud* is the good soul that manifests itself as a shadow on the right hand side of the path. The left hand *gimokud* is the bad soul that

shows itself as a shadow on the left side of the path.

The right hand soul is associated with health, activity and joy. It is associated with life itself and hence remains in the body throughout one's life. The left-hand soul is hurtful to the body it inhabits, being the cause of sluggishness, pain and sickness. It is the left hand soul which leaves the body at night and goes flying about risking various dangers. If it swims in the deep sea it sends shivers through the body of the sleeping person to whom it belongs; if it strikes a shadowy foot on a sharp stone, it drives pain through the material foot; if it drinks poison, it causes agony in the stomach. By various sorts of behavior it brings about a corresponding condition in the body it dominates.

The right hand *gimokud*, on the other hand, remains fixed in the body until death. It gives notice of its departure by visiting in the form of an insect.

The left hand *gimokud* inevitably becomes a *busaw* or demon ghost. It becomes indistinguishable from all other *busaw* who dig up dead bodies.

And Even Seven!

The Bukidnons believe that the souls in the body are seven: one jumps off the cliff; one swims in the water; one puts its hand into snake holes; one sits under a tree; one is always walking around; one is awake in the day; one is awake at night (Casal 1975).

These seven souls (*pipitu ha makatu*) were breathed into him upon birth by Miyaw-Biyaw, the good man of the sky. When all of these *pipitu ha makatu* are present in a man's body he is said to be well and strong. If one or more of the souls wanders out and gets into trouble, the body gets sick, sad or irritable. If all the *makatu* leave the body at the same time, the person dies (Unabia 1986).

Non-Human Souls

Not only man, but all of the larger animals have each two souls, say the Bagobos (Benedict 1916). Fowls, big birds, cats, carabaos, horses have a right hand soul that descends at death into the underworld. Smaller birds, the bees, and insects in general usually have only one soul, in rare cases two. More certain is that inanimate objects like food, tools, weapons and clothes have each but a single soul which goes down below to serve once more their owners.



No radical change in manner of life is conceived to be incident upon the shift of the soul to a new country. The spirit goes on with the same occupations that fill the time of the Bagobo during life, and everything that is used on the earth may be obtained down there. Whatever a spirit lacks in his traveling outfit (*onong*) that he brought with him, he can buy down there from the supplies laid in abundance before him. He may buy a jacket or a spear or a cock; since any manufactured article that wears out, or any animal that dies, forthwith gives up its immaterial *gimokud*, which then passes down to supply the needs of the spirits in the Great Country — a mythical situation quite in accordance with the common primitive concepts touching the souls of animals and of inanimate objects.

The same sun that shines on us by day travels around under the earth, and illuminates the world of the dead while we are in darkness, so that our day is synchronous with night in Kilut, and our night, with their day. It is during their period of darkness that all the dead are in action: the *gimokud* — weak, attenuated, shadowy, as they are conceived to be — work and dance and play and eat in the customary Bagobo manner; they sow and harvest rice; they dig camotes and cut sugar cane. The rice of Kilut is of immaculate whiteness, and each grain as big as a kernel of corn; the *kamotes* are the size of a great round pot, and every stick of sugar cane is as



The soul or gimokud sits on a leaf and waits until the hot rays of the sun dissolves it into water.

large as the trunk of a coconut-palm. All night long, even until dawn, this glad existence continues.

At the rising of the sun, or just before sunrise, all of these activities come to a halt. Every *gimokud* plucks one of the broad leaves of a plant called *baguidu*, and twists it into a vessel suggesting the form of a boat, similar in pattern to the ceremonial dishes of hemp-leaf in use at Bagobo festivals, and called by the same name, *kinudok*. Each one of the *gimokud* seats himself upon his individual leaf-vessel, and there sits, waiting, until the hot rays of the sun cause him to dissolve, leaving the leaf-vessel full of water. Not until our day begins, and darkness spreads over the land of the dead, does the life of the ghosts swing back into action; but as soon as the sun has passed up above the earth every *gimokud* resumes his personality, and takes up his work or his dance or his feasting, apparently as if no break had occurred. Then, again, the next morning, he makes a new leaf-vessel for himself from a fresh leaf (the old one having withered dry), sits down on it, and once more melts away under the sun's heat. This conception of a periodically interrupted existence would seem to imply that during 12 hours out of the 24 Kilut is empty of inhabitants, but it is questionable whether the Bagobo has ever made that generalization.

— Laura Watson Benedict (1916)

Rivers of the Soul



he shape of the coffins of many ancient Filipinos was that of a boat, even when the coffins were deposited on the ledges of a cave. The boat-shape is a giveaway. It attests to a time when our ancestors, particularly in the Western Bisayas and perhaps even in Cebu and Bohol disposed of their dead by letting them drift in the waters of a river, a lake or an immense sea.

Ancient Ilonggos believed that the god Mama Guayen carried the dead in a boat to the end of the world. On the other hand, ancient Waray thought that the god Badadum gathered the dead man's relatives, who had preceded him in the next life, and together they met the newcomer at the mouth of a river. A famous, elaborately designed burial jar, dated 200 B.C., was taken from Manunggul Cave in Palawan. Its cover portrays a soul of the dead (with a strap supporting its chin) being ferried by a deity across the waters.

The Bagobo soul, on the way to the place of the dead, first passes by the Land of the Black River. Here, under the direction of Mebuyan, the chief priestess of the place, the soul undergoes a ceremonial bath of head and joints. The bath acclimatizes the newcomer to the world of spirits so that he feels restful, content, and unwilling to return to earth (Benedict 1916).

In Panay, they believe that all streams lead to a main stream (a kind of thoroughfare) which goes through Guimaras Island and thence to Mount Kanlaon on the island of Negros. That mountain, the highest in the Bisayas, is regarded as the metropolis or big city of the souls. All the provinces in the Philippines have their own subterranean rivers with entry points at the foot of their own highest mountains, such as Banahaw in Laguna. They all eventually join a mainstream that heads for the underground metropolis, which is also the center of the universe. The only problem — from the Tagalog point of view — is that the center is located in the Bisayas and not in the Tagalog Region.

— Alicia Magos (1986)



ALAS, POOR BUMABAKAL

Bumabakal dies. His neighbors in the skyworld object to his being set in the death chair in the neighborhood on account of the stench and tell his kindred to carry him to the Upstream Region. They stop at the house of Humidhid of the Upstream Region. "Let us not permit the dead one to be set up here," say the people. "For soon he will make our village malodorous."

The relatives shoulder Bumabakal and go to the Downstream Region to the house of the Napulungot deities. Say the deities: "Why do you bring the perished one here? He will swell and stink in our village of the Downstream Region."

They shoulder Bumabakal and go to the underworld. They stop at the house of Yumogyog of the underworld. Say the underworld people: "Why do you bring the dead one here? For he will bloat and stink up our whole neighborhood."

The kinfolk shoulder poor Bumabakal again, go uphill, arrive at Kiangon. Say the Kiangon people, "Why do you bring the perished one who died hither? Will he not bloat and stink in our village of Kiangon?"

Say the exasperated skyworld bearers: "Let us take him uphill to the top of Dutukan."

They climb to the summit of the mountain and set down Bumabakal. They make a death chair, make a seat for the corpse, make a trough for carrying the liquids that flow from the mouth. They set up

the body on the mountain of Dutukan. The dead one swells. The fluids are carried by the flood and stop at Kiangon.

The child of Balitok and Kiangon is afflicted with terrible boils and likewise red and white inflammation. Balitok does not waste time. The Kiangon people resort to the diagnosis stick to ascertain the source of the affliction. The dead one is indicated.

Balitok does not delay, he gets a chicken, brings it home, invokes the ancestral spirits and the messenger gods, invokes the dead one of the skyworld: the head of Bumabakal and the throat of Bumabakal and the hands of Bumabakal and the feet of Bumabakal, the belly of Bumabakal, the liver of Bumabakal.

Balitok bleeds and singes the chicken, opens it and sees a good omen. He spreads the meat on cooked rice, recites a myth for the dead one on the mountain at Dutukan. The steam of the chicken goes heavenward straight to Bumabakal sitting on his death chair on top of the mountain.

The dead one smells it, is pleased, smiles. "The Balitoks of Kiangon lost no time in offering me the fattest of their chickens. I will blow, I will relieve, I will cure the child, the son of Balitok."

And that is how Bumabakal, the unwanted corpse of the skyworld, became the succor for the boils that he himself caused.

— ROY FRANKLIN BARTON
(1955)



The dead are transported to the underworld by water. In Panay all streams eventually converge in a main river leading to Kanlaon mountain.

No one would receive the corpse of the god because his stink would pollute the underworld.



The Geography of the Underworld



salient characteristic of the land of the dead among Filipinos is that it is a happy place. While the souls engage in the same activities they used to do in life, their circumstances are better. Houses are no longer of bamboo or timber but of silver and gold (Reynolds and Grant

1973). Manobos believe that all care, worry and trouble are no more. Under the mild rule of the mistress Ibu, souls work, eat and even marry (Garvan 1931). The rice in the Bagobo afterworld is of dazzling whiteness, each grain as big as a kernel of corn; the sweet potatoes are the size of a great round pot; and every stick of sugar cane is as large as a coconut tree. This glad existence lasts from the deep of night till dawn (Casal 1977).

By day, say the people of the Cordilleras, the land of the dead looks just like an ordinary landscape of trees and rocks. At night, however, these become houses where the spirits dwell. The Kalinga too concur that the land of the dead has definite spatial and temporal limits. Like other spirits, the souls of the dead roam about between 10:00–11:00 A.M. and between 2:00–3:00 P.M. The rest of the day is reserved for the living (Casal 1977).

Some peoples, like the Tagbanuwas and the Bukidnons, say that life in the underworld is the exact opposite of life here. If it is day here, it is night there. For the sun, according to the Bagobos, travels daily around the flat earth, continuing to shine underneath it. Rivers in the underworld flow from the sea to the mountains; rice is eaten cold (Fox 1977).

Journey to the Land of the Dead

Our various myths agree that the souls have to make the journey to the land of the dead. Whether overland or by water does not matter, they must make a journey (Demetrio 1990). The Bukidnons maintain that at death, the seven souls merge into one. This one soul makes its way to Balatucan for final judgment. The journey is long and tedious. To provide the soul with sustenance, the early Bukidnons used to suspend a small

*Life in the underworld
is the exact opposite of
life on earth. If it is day
here it is night there.*

sack of rice on a large pole over the grave (Clotet 1906). First the soul must pass through *liyang*, a huge rock. Then it proceeds to Binagbasan where the Tree of Record grows. The soul makes a notch on the tree to show that it has arrived. Then at Pinagsayawan, the soul dances the ritual dance of atonement for its faults and errors. It does not stop dancing until it sweats profusely, presumably in order to excrete all its negativities. Next the soul undergoes a haircut at Panamparan. From there it proceeds to Kumbirahan where a banquet awaits it. Then the god Andalapit leads the soul to the foot of Mount Balatucan where the gods of the dead assemble in judgment (Demetrio 1990).

If the soul is judged good, it is sent to Dunkituhan, the cloud-capped stairway to heaven at the summit of Mount Balatukan. If it is deemed wicked, it is sent to a river for punishment. Together with other wicked souls, it must fetch water night and day until its offences have been forgiven. Out of exhaustion, the wicked sweat blood, dyeing the river red and giving it a fishy smell (Demetrio 1990).

The belief in rewards and punishments in the next life, according to merit in this life, is most likely the result of contact with Moslems and Christians. But in the Bukidnon version, the wicked soul is not punished forever. It must merely do penance.

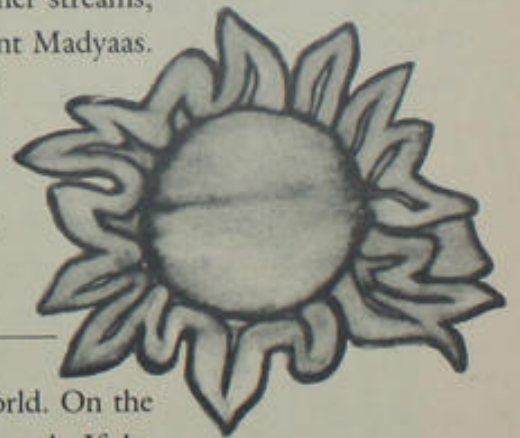
Among the Sulods of the uplands of Panay the entrance to the underworld is marked not by a rock but by an anthill which lies at some distance from the deathbed (Jocano 1968). The soul goes around the anthill and finds himself near the bank of a stream. There evil spirits try to devour him; fortunately for him, living relatives have propitiated them with a sacrifice before he starts on his journey. After crossing two other streams, where two gods question him, he reaches a cockpit at the entrance of Mount Madyaas. Being Filipino, he bets on one of the spurred roosters. A feast follows, after which he is led to a resthouse to await a ritual to strengthen his new body.

The journey to the land of the dead underscores the nature of death. Though life in the next world resembles life here, it is nonetheless different.

The Judges and the Witnesses

Our myths provide us with sufficient examples of judges in the underworld. On the shores of a lake, the Sulod soul is asked how many spouses he or she had on earth. If the male answers "only one," the god Bangla'e ridicules him. If he had more than one, he is praised and is allowed to ride on the shoulders of the giant. But if he says he had no wife at all, then he is made to swim in the sticky black waters while clinging to Bangla'e's pubic hair. However, if it is a female that is being questioned, the answer that she has had more than one husband opens her to ridicule and scolding (Jocano 1968).

When a Tagbanuwa dies, his soul enters a cave and follows a road leading to the bowels of the earth. At the first level, he meets Taliyakud, chief deity of the underworld,



who tends a fire between two tree trunks. He questions the soul whether it was good or bad during life. A lie is impossible because a louse on the soul — his conscience — answers for him. If the soul was bad, he is pitched into the fire and completely burned. If he was good, he is allowed to pass on to a happy place where game and good crops abound (Fox 1977). Though the Moslem influence is clear in the notion of an eternal reward and punishment — the Sultan of Sulu was the recognized overlord of the Tagbanuwas — the Tagbanuwas have injected whimsy in the form of a louse.

The Districts of the Underworld

There are different afterworlds according to the circumstances of one's death. For the T'bolis of Mindanao, whoever dies by the sword, either in battle or by murder, is welcomed in Kayong where the sun shines red. He is regaled with continual music on the *agong* and *kulintang*; the *higalong*, a two stringed guitar; and the *s'ludoy*, a bamboo violin. On the other hand the spirits of those who died a natural death go to Mogul where they have everything they could desire and where presumably the atmosphere is quieter (Casal 1977). Up in the Cordillera of Luzon, the Ifugaos share a similar belief. The souls of murdered victims do not go to the land where their ancestors who died of ordinary causes are. Instead they go to the lowest level of the Skyworld.

The Manobo land of the dead is located below the pillars of the earth. There each nation is assigned a place, the Spaniards, the Americans, the Chinese, the Bagobos, and so on. There is a special place in the Bagobo underworld for children who died at their mothers' breasts. They are nourished by the goddess Mebuyan whose entire body is delicious with milk glands. When they no longer need nursing and can shift for themselves, they go trooping to another district underground to join people who died later in life of disease or any form of sickness. Those who were slain by sword or spear go to a district where the plants are blood-red and the inhabitants carry the scars of their wounds (Casal 1977).

If the sky is seven-tiered, so likewise is the underworld among some Philippine peoples. Mangilala, the Bukidnon tempter, haunts the seventh tier of the underworld (Demetrio 1990). In the Tagbanuwa underworld, however, the soul dies seven times. With each death, he goes down deeper. His soul relatives bury him after his first death in the underworld. But in the subsequent deaths the burial is performed by insects and small animals. No longer must he undergo questioning by Taliyakud (Fox 1982).

After the Tagbanuwa soul has died seven times, it returns to earth in the form of an insect — a fly, dragonfly or dung beetle — which is neither edible nor destructive of plants (Fox 1982). And once the returning insect gets swatted? Then presumably the soul finally dwindles into oblivion. Meanwhile, however, the corpse has merged with the world to give it new life.



MEBUYAN, MOTHER OF THE UNDERWORLD

Long ago Lumabat and his sister had a quarrel because Lumabat had said, "You shall go with me up into heaven." And his sister replied, "No, I don't like to do that."

Then they began to fight each other. Soon the woman sat down on the big rice mortar and said to Lumabat, "Now I am going down below the earth, down to Gimokudan. Down there I shall begin to shake the lemon tree. Whenever I shake it, somebody up on the earth will die. If the fruit shaken down be ripe, then an old person will die on the earth; but if the fruit fall green, the one to die will be young."

Then she took a bowl filled with pounded rice, and poured the rice into the mortar for a sign that the people should die and go down to Gimokudan. Presently the mortar began to turn round and round while the woman was sitting upon it. All the while, as the mortar was revolving, it was slowly sinking into the earth. But just as it began to settle in the ground, the woman dropped handfuls of the pounded rice upon the earth, with the words: "See! I let fall this rice. This makes many people die, dropping down just like grains of rice. Thus hundreds of people go down; but none go up into heaven."

Straightway the mortar kept on turning round, and kept on going lower down, until it disappeared in the earth, with Lumabat's sister still sitting on it. After this, she came to be known as Mebuyan. Before she went down below the earth she was known only as "sister of Lumabat".

Mebuyan is now chief of a town called Banua Mebuyan ("Mebuyan's town"), where she takes care of all dead babies and gives them milk from her breasts. Mebuyan is ugly to look at, for her whole body is covered with nipples. All nursing children who still want milk go directly, when they die to Banua Mebuyan instead of to Gimokudan, and remain there with Mebuyan until they stop taking milk from her breasts. Then they go to their own families in Gimokudan where they can get rice and "live" very well.

All the spirits stop at Mebuyan's town, on their way to Gimokudan. There the spirits wash all their joints in the black river that runs through Banua Mebuyan, and they wash the tops of their heads too. This bathing (*pamalugu*) is for the purpose of making the spirits feel at home, so that they will not run away and go back to their own bodies. If the spirit could return to its body, the body would get up and be alive again.

— LAURA WATSON BENEDICT (1916)

LIMITTING THE LIFESPAN

A long time ago, when the world was young, people used to live for a thousand years or more. But when they reached old age they could no longer work. And the younger people had to support them.

But by and by, there were so many old people that the young people found it difficult to support all of them. Finally, the young people began using

the old people as garden fences. For there did not seem to be any other use for them.

Kabuniyan, the ruler of the skyworld, saw this, and taking pity on the old people, he shortened their lives.

That is why the people of the earth no longer lived to be a thousand years. They rarely live to be even a hundred years.

— I. V. MALLARI AND LAURENCE L. WILSON, 1958

WHY SPIRITS CANNOT BE SEEN

1. Long ago the spirits of dead people were visible. Men often wrestled with them. These spirits looked like human beings. Whenever they had a wrestling match with men, they were defeated. Men always defeated these *anitos* or spirits.

Whenever these *anitos* were thrown on the ground, they turned into what we call *linesles* or *kamote* vines. But the men saw that they always stood up ready to wrestle with the men again. This made the men very angry. So their quarrels never stopped.

Finally, the men used their heads. They started a fire near the place where they had their fights. Then they fought those troublesome spirits for the last time to end their disturbances.

When the fights began, the men directed the *anitos* near the place where the fire was burning. Then these *anitos* were thrown to the ground near the fire. Immediately the *anitos* turned into *kamote* vines. Quickly the men got the fire and burned the vines. Thus ended the *anitos* showing themselves to human beings.

That is why people today cannot see the spirits or *anitos* of dead people any longer.

— EDWARD UMAMING, 1974

2. When the world was young, the people of the earth could see and talk to the *anitos* or the spirits of those who had died. The spirits looked like ordinary people, except that their faces were red and they were nothing but *tangbato* — small, yellowish-red water plants which grew in the rice paddies.

The spirits lived in many places. The spirits of those whose bodies had been placed in caves lived in caves. The spirits of those who had been drowned lived along the banks of rivers. The spirits of those who had died while traveling or who had committed suicide lived under big trees. And the spirits of those whose bodies had been buried inside the village lived just outside the village.

The last group of spirits were the most friendly to the people. They guarded the village from intruders.

One night, a group of spirits decided to play a joke on the people, especially a girl. They wanted to show that they could do what ordinary people could not.

And so they went to the *ebgan*, the house where the unmarried girls of the village slept together. They carried away one of the girls together with her wooden bed.

The spirits took the girl, still soundly asleep in her bed, to a tree. Then they hung the bed from one of the branches, so that it were as though the girl was sleeping in a cradle.

When the girl finally opened her eyes in the morning she was surprised to see, not the ceiling of the *ebgan*, but a tangle of leaves and branches. The swaying of her bed made her so afraid that she jumped out of it without a second thought.

Luckily the girl was not hurt although her bed was hung high above the ground. And she was able to reach the *ebgan* with no other damage than to her pride.

The girl knew, of course, that it was the spirits who had played a joke on her. She knew, too that they would return for her at night.

Anticipating their return, the girl roasted some dried lima beans. And that night, as soon as all her companions were fast asleep, she chewed the roasted beans one by one.

The girl made so much noise chewing the roasted lima beans that one would think there was a dog nearby chewing a bone. The noise startled the spirits when they returned. And so they asked the girl, "What are you doing in the middle of the night?"

"I'm chewing your bones," the girl replied. This frightened the spirits so much that they ran away and never came back.

In spite of this, however, the spirits became more and more cruel. Finally, the people got angry with them and decided to drive them away. But the spirits put up a fight.

Both the spirits and the people used stones for weapons. And to make those weapons more deadly, both sides heated the stones — the spirits by putting them out in the sun; the people by placing them in boiling water.

The fight was furious, and it lasted a whole day. It looked at first as if it would be a draw. But finally the people hit a pregnant spirit squarely in the stomach.

It was then that the spirits admitted defeat. And they all disappeared from sight, never to be seen again. But they are still around, causing people a lot of pain and suffering. — I.V. MALLARI AND LAURENCE L. WILSON, 1958

ROOT CROPS GROW DOWNWARD



*No wonder there were
so few kamotes on
earth, the people of the
underworld ate them.
(Maybe the pig did too).*

One day a brave woman named Matono was working in her taro field when the place she was standing on fell to the underworld. She was unable to return to the top of the earth. She wandered for many days and reached houses inhabited by people who were large and black. They had large eyes and their teeth and ears were long.

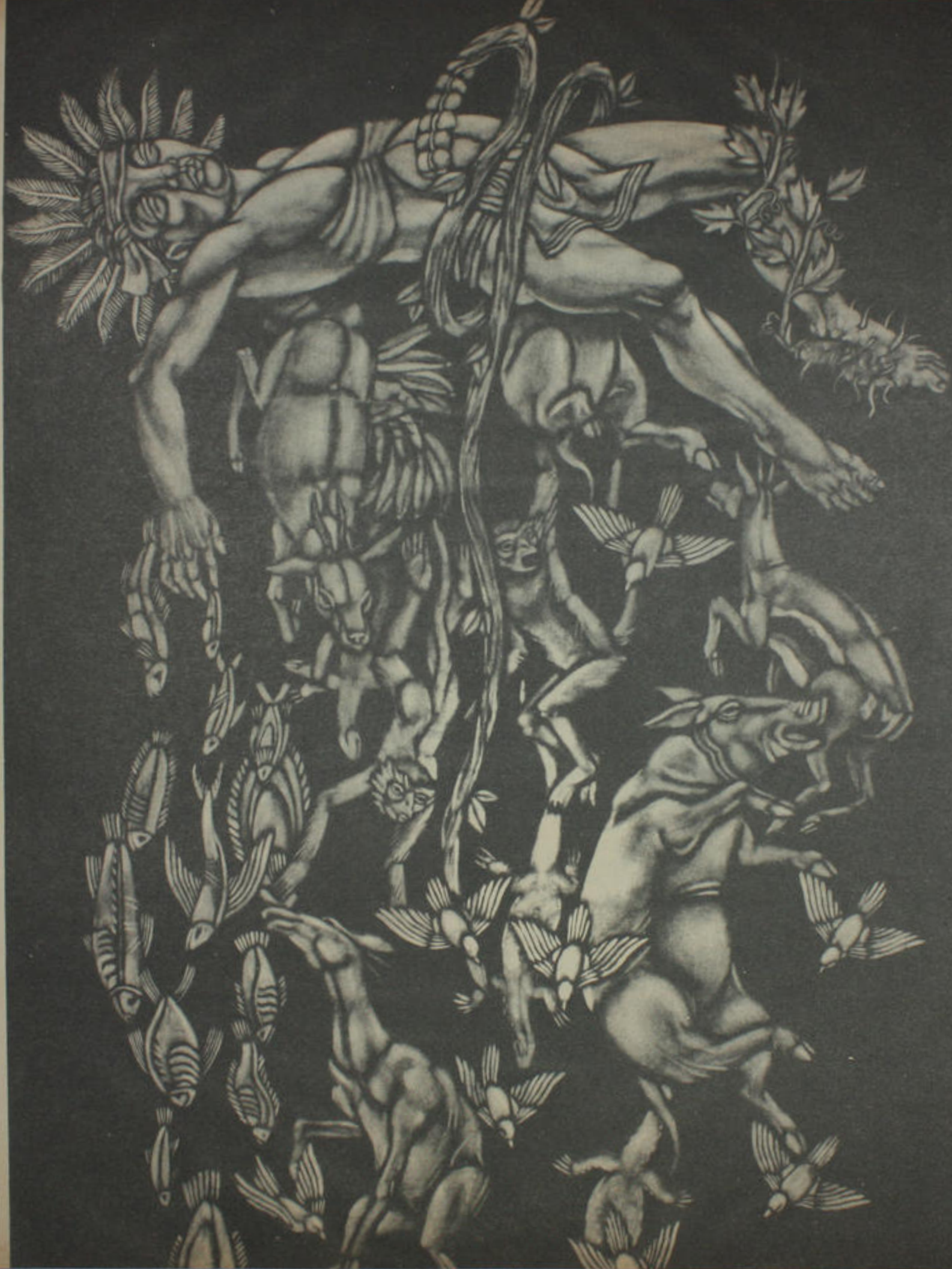
Matono sought shelter in the first house where she stopped for the black people who lived there were kind to her. One black man wished to marry her but she was not willing to as he was so big.

Frequently Matono strolled about. She could see camotes, *gabi*, rice and other plants hanging under the earth, just above her head. And she

knew that was why there were so few camotes, *gabi*, rice and other things on top of the earth, because the people under the earth were eating the plants belonging to the top of the earth. The woman also saw large hogs rubbing against the posts of the earth. And she saw the earth shaking so that she knew there was an earthquake.

Finally Matono became homesick. Eventually she found a cave leading to the top of the earth. When she had entered the cave she could see that people of the underworld were pursuing her. When Matono reached the top of the earth she rolled a large stone over the mouth of the cave and ran away.

— C. S. MOSS (1924)



Life from Death

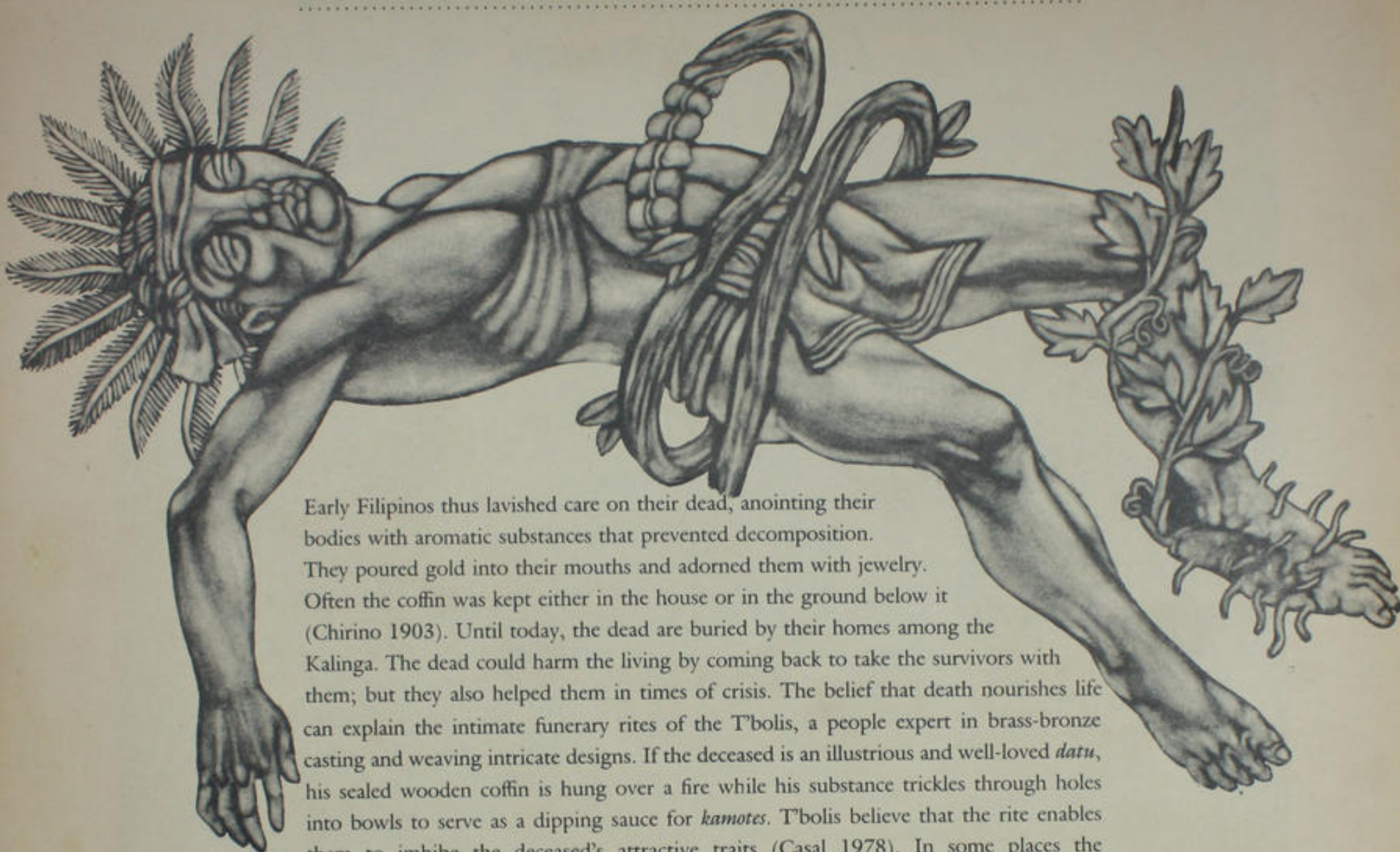


vegetation growing over a buried, decomposing body draws sustenance from it. Life ends in death; but, for Filipinos, life feeds on death. The dissolution of matter releases new creative forces.

Balitok of Kiangin in Ifugao went headhunting together with his fellow villagers. A head was taken; but when a victory cry was raised, the head shouted with the crew. The head was quickly buried. Years later, a new plant with nuts the shape and the weight of a human head appeared on the burial spot. It was the coconut. Upon opening the nut and drinking of the milk, the villagers developed headaches which faded away once Balitok offered sacrifice (Barton 1955). Variants on the theme of the coconut and the human head are widespread in the Philippines.

Other parts of the human body are said to have given rise to the plant and animal kingdom. Eight *magbabaya* or creator spirits of the Bukidnons took pity on the first human couple because they were starving. One of them allowed himself to be killed and cut into pieces so that his body might serve as compost. His blood drained into the ground and became boars and deer; his blood splattered on the trees to become monkeys and birds; washed in the river, the blood of his hands became fish. Out of the buried bloodstained leaves edible plants grew forth (Cole 1956). The Mangyans of Mindoro relate a similar tale. After the youngest child of the first human couple died, he was cut up and thrown in different directions. From the feet sprang the purplish yam called *ubi*; from the fingers, the ever-curving, ever-clutching banana fruits; from the fat of the intestine, the cotton tree with its bloated fruit; and from the long intestines, useful vines (Iturralde 1973).

Different parts of the human body are said to have given rise to the plant and animal kingdom.



Early Filipinos thus lavished care on their dead, anointing their bodies with aromatic substances that prevented decomposition. They poured gold into their mouths and adorned them with jewelry. Often the coffin was kept either in the house or in the ground below it (Chirino 1903). Until today, the dead are buried by their homes among the Kalinga. The dead could harm the living by coming back to take the survivors with them; but they also helped them in times of crisis. The belief that death nourishes life can explain the intimate funerary rites of the T'bolis, a people expert in brass-bronze casting and weaving intricate designs. If the deceased is an illustrious and well-loved *datu*, his sealed wooden coffin is hung over a fire while his substance trickles through holes into bowls to serve as a dipping sauce for *kamotes*. T'bolis believe that the rite enables them to imbibe the deceased's attractive traits (Casal 1978). In some places the interconnectedness between death and life has taken extreme forms. Thus, during the early decades of this century, Tinggian warriors lapped up the blood of a severed enemy head (Scott 1982), while Bagobos bathed in the blood of a slain slave (Gloria 1987).

What meanings the converts, in such contexts, must have read into the Christian mass. For the ritual centers around a man-God whose body and blood, in the form of bread and wine, give those who eat them eternal life.



Is Hell Filipino?



stories about the underworld being a place of torment rather than happiness could be the result of Christian influence, claimed Isabelo de los Reyes, Rizal's eminent contemporary and authority on folklore.

In Mindanao and Sulu such stories may betray Moslem influence. Hell is not a native concept. There is no word for it. Pagan Filipinos in the past or in the present have regarded earth's miseries and disappointments enough punishment for their shortcomings.

Speaking about the T'bolis, Fr. Gabriel Casal (1978) avers that their morality does not reward a good man's life with heaven; but neither does it banish anyone to hellfire for evil deeds. The Judaeo-Christian-Moslem tradition regards sin as a conscious, wilful transgression of God's eternal law. The law can be known by listening both to his representatives on earth and to one's conscience. Sin is not readily translated into the local term.

Sala, among the T'bolis, is a failure to conform to the customs and traditions of one's people. A common example is the failure to offer a sacrifice, when it is expected, simply because one does not have the material means. The deities punish even unintended failures (Casal 1978).

Honesty, helpfulness, and hospitality are traits taught the T'boli by his myths. And indeed among them, houses are never locked and personal belongings are respected by all when left unguarded. Should a traveller pass by, shouting a greeting, he is invited in to stay for the night. Work is shared in the fields and when making a livelihood. Respect for tradition, however, is not the same as respect for a moral order defined by the Lawgiver; nor does it involve the use of a "conscience" as an inner guide. The norm for measuring a deed is whether or not it conforms to tradition. Under these circumstances, no rigid distinction can be made between good and evil (Casal 1978).





There was no belief in hell before the coming of Christianity. Filipinos had a different notion of sin.

Similar patterns have been described for the Tagalogs. *Sala* covers a wide gamut of misdeeds from crime to mere error. To kill a rival is a *sala*. So is accidentally dropping a plate or unknowingly pissing on an unseen dwarf. Unlike the English words “crime” or “sin,” *sala* does not necessarily denote premeditation, wilfulness, and deliberate intent. Its equation with sin in modern Tagalog is obviously the result of Christian influence. When the Spanish missionaries introduced confession in the 17th century, they could not figure out the attitude of their parishioners. Instead of reporting only those deeds that were deliberate misdeeds, Filipinos related an endless list of things they did (Rafael 1988). The reason may have been that tricky term, *sala*, which the missionaries took to be sin but which the owners of the language meant to be fault and error.

Today, despite centuries of exposure to Christianity and Western law, there is evidence that many Tagalogs (and other lowland Christian Filipinos) are reluctant to believe in a hell where a sinner is punished for eternity. A heaven where one lives in bliss with his or her beloved ones, yes, many would accept that without much effort. What seems difficult for them is the notion of a hell. One of the many reasons for this reluctance may be *sala* and the notion of offense it implies (Zialcita 1989). As some argue, “If a person kills somebody else, perhaps he simply got carried away. So why should he be penalized?”

Forgiveness therefore is a value that sits deep in the Filipino psyche. No one’s crime is black enough for our soft hearts to forgive and forget — and so we never learn. We readily forgave collaborators with our various colonial masters; we are ready to forgive our dead dictator and his wife.

Indeed, in most Filipino epics one observes that in the end all the characters who were killed are resurrected whether good or bad. Even the very bad who cause endless and outrageous sufferings to the heroes are made to live again with hardly a thought to punishment. (Quite a difference from the witches broiled in ovens and wicked step-mothers sundered in two by horses in European folktales).

Among early Filipinos, the afterlife did not divide people according to their moral merit on earth.



The Rich and the Poor in the Afterlife



even and hell were alien concepts. What the afterlife of our ancestors divided was the rich and the poor. Rich *datus*, Loarca reports, bury their dead with gold cloth and other valuable objects, saying that if they depart rich they will be well-received in the other world, but coldly if they go poor. "Some *datus*," reports Loarca, "load a ship with more than 60 slaves, fill it up with food and drink and place the dead on board, and the entire vessel, including the live slaves, are buried in the earth" (B & R, V).

As if a stratified society in life were not enough, the Bukidnons are assured that the souls who die poor live in poverty in the next world while wealthy individuals on earth also live in abundance after death.

"The souls of the poor people remain forever in the underworld if no one of the living relatives can offer sacrifices to redeem them," is the belief of the Sulod of Panay (Jocano 1975). The lord of the underworld "kept these souls in virtual imprisonment and, after years of staying there unredeemed, they are fed to the two giants who guard the gates of the underworld.

Even in death the poor can't make it to equality. They are destined for a lesser afterlife than the rich.

Early religion in the Philippines, as elsewhere in Island Southeast Asia, before the advent of Hinduism, Islam and Christianity, saw the world as a continuous whole that death did not destroy. All objects, including personal belongings, had a soul, an *anito*, which kept them from dissolution. Humans had in fact at least two souls — one of which journeyed to the land of the dead. Journeys to the other world, of both humans and non-humans, were made possible through various means: underground burials or water burials. The next world was variously conceived. Some groups conceived of it as an underground world; others as a high mountain across a wide body of water. In any case, life there was the same as life here. The rich were as rich, the poor as poor. The mighty and the famous exulted in their prowess, while the humble and the ordinary led new but still undistinguished lives. The underworld mirrored the upper world; the upstream the downstream; the mountain the plain. The one consolation was that there, as here, the family would be together.

How strange and how appealing must have been Christianity and Islam. They promised eternal bliss in the next life to the poorest of the poor, if they led a meritorious life. They also promised that the lowliest could surpass the mightiest in the other world on condition that a person pray, fast, and deny himself even innocent pleasures. Christianity offered, for veneration, a Crucified God and beggar saints like San Roque. The promise of an afterlife where positions would be reversed may be one reason why the two religions took root.



THE NEEDY AND THE WEALTHY TRY TO LIVE APART



In the next life, the rich tower above, while the poor cower below.

Kabuniyan made some people to be rich and some to be poor. There are the rich to give the poor their food, and there are the poor to work for the rich.

If the rich do not give feasts so that the poor may eat, the rich will lose property and become poor. If the poor do not help the rich, their poverty will increase, and they will die soon.

Once the rich and the poor quarreled. The rich went to one place to live, and the poor went to another place to live. The poor people all became thin, because they had no meat. The rich lost much property, because there were no poor to

help them.

One day the rich celebrated a feast, the *pachit*. There was no rattan with which to tie the hogs, but they tied them with cloth. There was no grass to put the meat on, but they put it on the death blanket. There was no wood with which to cook the meat, but they used lard. They tried to eat the meat but it was tough. They could not chew it. It was necessary to cut it into small pieces, and they swallowed the small pieces.

The rich men became sick. Since then the rich men decided to live with the poor again.

— C. S. MOSS (1924)



O R B I D D E

N R O U N D



Mediators between Spirits and Men

QUOTES FROM THE ACCOUNTS OF THE EARLY SPANISH MISSIONARIES

Note: "In insular Southeast Asia," writes Alfred McCoy, "the most common term for spirit medium is derived from the classical Malay word *belian-balian* or *waylan* in Java, Bali, Borneo, and Halmahera; *bailan*, *mabalian* or *baylan* among the interior populations of Mindanao; and *baylan* or *babaylan* in the Visayan region of the Central Philippines."



The babaylan are well
built and wear a garment
that falls to the ankles.
They talk to the gods.

he priestesses dress very gaily, with garlands on their heads, and are resplendent with gold. They bring to the place of sacrifice some *pitarrillas* (a kind of earthen jar) full of rice-wine, besides a live hog and a quantity of prepared food. Then the priestess chants her songs and invokes the (spirit) who appears to her all glistening in gold. Then he enters her body and hurls her to the ground, foaming at the mouth as one possessed. In this state she declares whether the sick person is to recover or not. In regard to other matters, she foretells the future. All this takes place to the sound of bells and kettledrums. Then she rises and taking a spear, she pierces the heart of the hog. They dress it and prepare a dish for the (spirit). Upon an altar erected there, they place the dressed hog, rice, bananas, wine, and all the other articles of food that they have brought. All this is done in behalf of sick persons, or to redeem those who are confined in the infernal regions."

— Miguel de Loarca
Binayas 1582–1583



n every port we find that the people have their god. All of them call him *divate*, and for surname they give him the name of their village. They have a god of the sea and a god of the rivers. To these gods they sacrifice swine, reserving for this especially those of a reddish color. For this sacrifice they rear such as are very large and fat.

"They have priests, whom they call *bailanes*; and they believe that the priests talk with their gods. When they are about to perform the sacrifice, they prepare the place with many green branches from the trees, and pieces of cloth painted as handsomely as possible. The *bailan* plays on a heavy reed pipe about one *brazo* in length, such as are common in that land, in the manner of a trumpet; and, while thus engaged, the people say that he talks to their gods. Then he gives a lance-thrust to the hog. Meanwhile, and

even for a long time before commencing the rite, the women ring a certain kind of bell, play on small drums, and beat on porcelain vases with small sticks thus producing a sort of music which makes it very difficult for them to hear one another.

"After the hog is killed, they dress it, and all eat of the flesh. They throw a portion of the dressed animal, placed in nets, into the river or into the sea, according to the location of the village; and they say that they do this in order that the god of the river or that of the sea may eat it. No one eats of the part touched by the lance-thrust, except the *bailan*."

— Captain Diego Artieda,
Bisayas, 1569-1570



he priest is called *bayoc*, and he dresses like a woman. He wears a *tapis*, or apron, and ties up his hair like a woman, although above the *tapis* he wears his *yua* (knife) as other men. . . . The idol to whom this *bayoc* principally offers sacrifice is called Malyari, which means "powerful".

This idol is made with a wooden head and its body and hands of straw. They dress it up like an image after their manner, place it on its altar and niche, then light for it torches of pitch for lack of wax candles.

"All the people of the *rancheria* assemble to make the sacrifice. Having built his altar, the *bayoc* takes his spear in his hand and makes three holes in the earth with it. Those holes are filled with wine, and the spear, having been thrust into the ground, the *bayoc* begins his sacrifice, with a leaf of wild *anahao* or wild palm in his hand. He commences to shiver, his whole body trembling, and making many wry faces by means of his eyes, he generally talks, sometimes between his teeth, without anyone understanding him. Sometimes he contents himself with the wry faces which he makes with his eyes and the tremblings of all his body. After a few minutes he strikes himself twice on the knee with the hand in which he holds the palm-leaf, and says that he is the *anito* to whom the sacrifice is being made.

"The *bayoc* promises to fulfill the desire of the person who is having the sacrifice made, and immediately the bystanders begin to sing certain songs in praise of the *anito* or idol. While they are being sung, they give the *bayoc* and the sacristan something to drink, and after those two, all those present drink." But no one drinks or eats until the *bayoc* (does) for they say they would die if they eat and drink before the *anito*.

"The office of *bayoc* is held in high estimation among them for it possesses such advantages that for certain honors he performs for a certain person they give him ten *taes* in gold . . . Relatives and friends of the deceased (if such be the ceremony) are invited to be present. They offer food made of rice, *buyo*, tobacco and wine to the

amount that seems sufficient for the guests.

"Then clothing *Malyari* as abovesaid, and presiding over the ceremonies . . . there is pure disorder. In memory of the deceased some lament, some sing, some play their musical instruments, and some dance after their manner. Finally, what is offered is consumed, and when they finish eating and drinking, the sacrifice is finished, and each of the guests takes his cup from which he has drunk . . .

"They also have their kind of baptism, which only the *bayoc* has authority to administer. The baptized one is clothed according to their fashion. He looses his hair and hangs at the ends some small pieces of gold. In place of water the *bayoc* baptizes him with the blood of a hog. The relatives of the one baptised stand all about him and the former on top of a rock."

— Fray Domingo Perez, O.P.,
Zambales, 1609-1616



hey esteem that rank greatly, for besides the reputation and respect that that employment brings them, they also receive large offerings. All who have been present at the sacrifice make them gifts, one cotton, one gold, and one a fowl. The sacrifice takes place in their houses. The victim is now a hog, now a fowl, now some fish or rice; and the sacrifice is differently named according to the various victims. It is performed by the sacrificer stabbing the victim amid certain ceremonies, which he performs to a cadence marked by a drum or a bell. That is the time in which the (spirit) takes possession of them. He causes them to make innumerable contortions and grimaces, after the end of which they tell what they believe they have seen or heard.

"As for their persons, those people are well built, have handsome features, and are light-complexioned. They are clad in a garment that falls to the ankles, which is made of striped cotton of various colors. Those called *Pintados*, and those of the island of Mindanao, wear short white, yellow, or red tunics, which hang to the knees, bound in by a girdle one *vara* wide and two and one-half *brazas* long; this is, as a general rule, white or red, and always falls to the knees. They wear neither stockings nor shoes; and instead of a hat they use a bit of cloth, which they wind twice or thrice around the head. Their whole adornment consists in having very rich and beautiful necklaces, earrings and gold rings or bracelets."

— Diego de Bobadilla
1638-1640



The Babaylan

A.K.A. ALBULARYO, MANANAMBAL, BELIAN, MAMBUNONG, ETC.



Shamanism in the Philippines as in other parts of the world is as old as belief in souls. For the shaman is a person, male or female, who is especially selected by the spirits to act as the mediator between their world and the world of human beings. The soul of the shaman becomes either a passive medium or an active agent in this mediation.

The shaman candidate is chosen because of his inherent physical and mental qualities: the person is of a quiet nature, soft spoken and of few words, is given to introspection, and, is generally of a serious mold (Demetrio 1990). In some cases, a normal, ordinary young man or woman, of a different character mold from the person described above, may receive the call to become a shaman. But after the initial call and the process of initiation, which may be long or short, the chosen one's personality changes; and he or she, too, becomes quiet, introspective and serious.

Shaman's Functions

The shaman or *albularyo*, *mananambal*, *daetan*, *baylan*, *belian*, *baglan*, *mambunong*, etc. is a special person in primitive society. Her office is focused directly on achieving the psychic balance of her community. She is essentially a person in the service of others. Her healing powers, her ecstasy whereby she goes out in search of the soul of the sick person in order to guide it back to its body and to health, or her journey to conduct the soul of the dead to the land of the dead; her clairvoyance and ability to read the secrets of men's hearts, her reputed wisdom in counselling, her dramatic talents that enable her audience to participate in celestial and underworldly experiences, her easy tolerance of the extremes of heat and cold, her struggles with demons and the spiritual foes of her people, her ease in contacting the supreme being and the spirit world — all are meant to strengthen and support the spiritual life of the community (Eliade 1974). For a person who can engage the foes of the community, especially the unseen ones, enter into struggle with them, and come out usually victorious, cannot but be a psychological and mental pillar of her people. Thus the shaman, together with the warriors, and the other physical and spiritual leaders of the people, safeguards the psychic equilibrium of all concerned (Demetrio 1990).

During his initiation a shaman may be found seated on the top branch of a balete, seemingly out of this world.

Shamanic Initiation

The shaman acquires her powers through her initiation. During the days, weeks, months or years of her initiation, she disappears from home. When she is finally found, she is either seated on top of a branch of a *balete* or sitting beneath it, seemingly out of this world, unmindful of the ordinary life of people around her. She seems totally absorbed in some person or persons whom she sees but are altogether unseen by others, to whom she totally attends. Bisayan shamans, according to Alcina (1960), went through nuptial rites with the Diwata in the *balete* tree and for this rite she bedecked herself with gold fineries.

During initiation the candidate is brought by her initiators to visit the land of Diwata in the sky or the land where the demons dwell. She meets with the spirits of diseases who partake of her flesh which is scraped by her initiation masters. These spirits of disease thereby become her healing assistants. The shaman-to-be is given a new pair of eyes, a new heart and new intestines; her flesh is also renewed, fitting her to operate in the realm of the spirits. Her initiation is analogous to the paschal mystery, whereby she dies to her old self and awakens to new life: the life of the spirits.

Here is an example from the Tagalogs of Mount Banahaw who have retained many pre-Christian beliefs and practices:

As a young man Agapito Illustrisimo, founder of *Samahan ng Tatlong Persona Solo Dios* underwent a shamanic initiation. His grandfather, a brave man and a leader of the Pulahan in Cebu, gathered all his grandsons and said: "Dig a grave and bury me standing up, alive, with my head above the ground." They did as told. The head spoke: "To whoever of you comes back tonight I will bestow a gift and a knowledge". When midnight came no one returned but Agapito. He approached his grandfather who said: "Receive this which I place in your mouth and you will become the leader of the Pulahan. At midnight of the seventh day come back and gouge out my right eye. Then I shall die." When the night came the young man returned and the old man told him that he must put the eye inside a chest and not open it until the 17th day. Agapito gouged out his grandfather's right eye as instructed and after that the old man died. Instantly the body was reduced to skeleton. He brought home the eye and kept it in a chest. On the 17th day, when he opened the chest, the eye had disappeared. Instead seven tiny birds flew out and entered his body. A voice was saying: "Those are the seven powers we bestow on you." The fantastic story makes little sense if interpreted literally — it must be understood symbolically (Marasigan 1985).

Much earlier, Isabelo de los Reyes had reported that a young girl of 15 years old saw seven small men on a fence, about a *palmo* high each. She gathered them in her apron and they entered her body. Thus the girl became the dwelling place of the *kibaans* which made her famous in Vigan (de los Reyes 1909).

The powers the shaman acquires during her initiation (such as the curing ability she received from her friendship with spirits of the diseases) are powers which are reactivated during her seances (Nimmo 1975).

Two Types of Shamans

Rahman (1959) and Eliade (1974) tell us that there are two types of shamans: the first are those who are possessed by spirits as their mediums, and the second who are the masters of the spirits. Those who belong to this second Eliade calls the "masters of ecstasy." It is them whom he considers the real shamans (1964).

The shamans of the first type are found in the Philippines especially in connection with spiritism and the cult of the dead. In this case, the shaman is not in control of herself or the spirits. Rather, she is controlled by the spirits who possess her (Demetrio 1990; 1973). What happens to the soul of the shaman who is thus invaded? A satisfactory explanation has still to be arrived at. In any case the shaman speaks in the voice and tone of the spirit in possession of her. This seems to be the type of functionary described by Joy Dadole in her thesis on the *talagbusao* phenomenon among the Bukidnons in north Central Mindanao (1988). This is also cited by Isabelo de los Reyes as quite prevalent in the Ilocos provinces of his day (1909).

The second type of shaman whom Eliade writes about in his book on shamanism, and whom he takes to be the premier of shamanism is the ecstatic one. Here the shaman is not possessed by the spirits. It is she who possesses them. They do her bidding. The shaman is the principal actress. She is not merely the medium of the spirits. She is the active agent, summoning, directing, commanding the spirits to do her will. She goes into ecstasy or enters into a trance, which means that her soul goes out of her body to perform the function proper to her office: to lure a stray soul back to its proper body, or to lead the dead man's soul to the land of the dead, or to secure information from the spirit world for settling a community problem, to cure the sick or to win a war (1964).

While the shaman is in a trance, her body is rigid and numb. The shaman, however, can speak as though she were God speaking or some other high spirit. But she does it knowingly, allowing herself to be the spokesman of the deity. And she does it willingly, not because she is forced to act as medium. In the state of ecstasy, the shaman can also speak in her own tone and voice as she describes the places she visits in the performance of her job. This type is also found in the Philippines (Eliade 1964).

The Shaman as Incarnation of God or Higher Spirits

But this incarnation is not equivalent to "possession", the reason being, that this incarnation is freely willed by the shaman. It is her decision to allow the deity to be





incarnated in her so that she can become the medium of the deity in transmitting his message, or in making the community acquainted with his will. In the case of true possession, it is the spirit of the dead or the ancestor who comes in of its own accord and in its own time, regardless of whether the medium is ready or not. Sometimes it is even against the will of the person possessed. Eliade himself tells us that "it is in incarnating ghosts that 'possession' proper begins" (1964). What he says about the *bailan* and the *basir* of Borneo that the souls of the ancestors or of the dead never take possession of (them), that they are solely instruments of expression of the divinities, can also be said of our own Filipino ecstatic shamans.

The Influences of Philippine Shamanism

Philippine shamanism shares many traits with the rest of southeast Asia. Most of our shamans conduct their seance at night. It is started by dancing and ends up with the shaman falling down unconscious. During that time she is numb and rigid and is covered by a black sheet as in Ilokos (de los Reyes 1909) and she goes in search of the stray soul of the sick or conducts the soul of the dead to the land of the dead.

Generally the shaman's soul in ecstasy is engaged in a dialogue to find out the cause of the sickness and the cure for it.

Sickness as due to the flight of the soul of the sick person is the "predominant conception throughout the Indonesian area" (Eliade 1964). Cure then is effected by the shaman searching for the soul and bringing it back. This belief and practice is also found in Philippine shamanic healing (Demetrio 1990). However, as in other parts of Southeast Asia, sickness can also be due to the presence within the body of an evil spirit which the shaman will have to expel; or the presence of foreign objects induced by sorcerers or magicians (Eliade 1974). Thus the cure will consist in extracting a pebble, a feather, a worm or an insect. Our *espiritistas* have become internationally famous because of similar feats.

The Bataks of Sumatra believe that the soul leaves and enters the body through the fontanel (Eliade 1964). The *sibaso* or shaman wears a costume of many colors if he is to invoke several spirits. Their presence is shown by the words uttered by the *sibaso* in secret language, "the language of the spirit". Thus someone must interpret it in order that the cause and cure of the illness be ascertained. This same procedure obtains in Philippine shamanic healing (Demetrio 1990).

The Sea Dyaks call their shamans *manang* whether the person be a man or woman or a sexless or impotent man (Eliade 1964). The *manang* has a box containing many magical objects. But the most important of these are the quartz crystals (*bata ilau*, that is, stones of light). Quartz crystals are also used by Philippine shamans and medicine men (Eliade 1964; Fox 1982). In the course of the curing seance once the leading shaman

has fallen to the ground, a blanket is thrown over her, and the audience waits for the result of her ecstatic journey. She searches for the soul in the underworld. Once she has captured it, the shaman rises, holds it in her hand and replaces it through the skull or the fontanel. The cure ends with the sacrifice of a chicken (Eliade 1965). Most healing rituals performed by Philippine shamans also end with the offering of a chicken, especially a white one (*ugis*) (Demetrio 1975).

There were different kinds of religious specialists among ancient Filipinos. Shamans were only one type. There were fortune-tellers whose task it was to predict the future. The Tagalogs had a special type, called *sonat*, who helped a person to die at which time he predicted the soul's condition in the next life (B & R, VII).

Then there were sorcerers, either men or women, who practised magic in secret (Himes 1964). Tagalogs had a variety of sorcerers. Some could cause lovers to despise and abandon their wives and could even prevent them from having intercourse with the latter. Others, however, made charms out of wood, stones, and herbs which, when taken in stirred feelings of love. Some religious specialists could kill a victim by merely saluting or raising their hand; others preyed on those dressed in white whose liver they tore out (B & R, VIII).

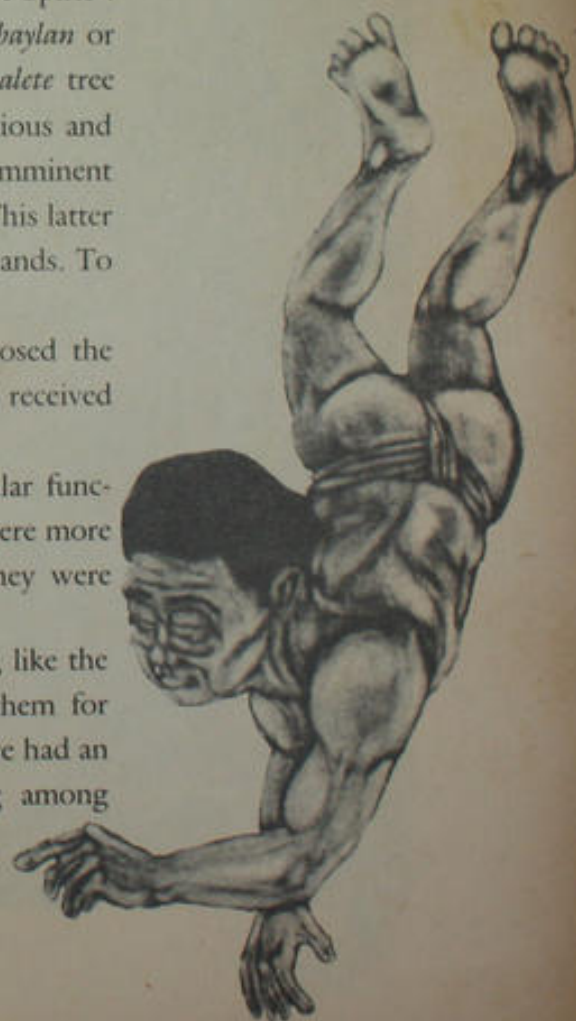
Shamans among the Warays were called *divataban* or "those possessed by the Spirit". Here too were different kinds. The most common group were the all-female *baylan* or the *daetaban*. Shining with gold and ornaments, they went to the sacred *balete* tree where the *divata*, the lord from on high, selected them at his pleasure. Delirious and foaming, they claimed to have been spoken to by the master and had visions of imminent rape by spirits (Himes 1964). In their ecstasy, they handled fire and live coals. This latter feat must have once been widespread in the Philippines, as in the South Sea Islands. To this day in the uplands of Cavite, walking on live coals is an important ritual.

The *daetaban/baylan* offered sacrifice on behalf of the community, diagnosed the condition of the sick, and performed sacrifices for the dead. As payment, they received food, but often gold, money or clothing as well.

Higher in rank were the *katooran*. Also exclusively women, they had similar functions as the *baylan*; but they had closer ties with the *divata*. Their predictions were more accurate; and their offerings had better chances of being answered. Thus they were wealthier than other shamans.

Some shamans were less spectacular in their activities. The Waray *tambalan*, like the Tagalog *manggagaway*, knew the properties of roots and herbs and used them for healing. Though they did not commit their knowledge to writing, they must have had an encyclopedic overview of their field. Ethnographies of healers and healing among cultural minorities in the Philippines today suggest as much.

Though most shamans were women, men too could join them. Among Tagalogs and Bisayans, there was a price to this.



Perhaps one of the most interesting powers claimed by the ecstatic shaman is the ability to fly. What is generally admitted is her power to enter into an altered state of consciousness or trance. What is hard to accept is the truth of her literally physical flying. But in our epics we read of heroes and heroines covering great distances in a short time either borne on their shields, or kerchiefs (*mosala* or *monsala*), or on the wings of the wind, or by lightning. This is true of the heroines of the Subanon, Bukidnon and Palawan epics. One is, however, quite surprised to hear a female shaman noted and practising in Tawi-Tawi, Sulu, claiming that she can literally fly. Reproduced here is the interview which the Finnish anthropologist H. Arlo Nimmo had with Laisiha, a female shaman.

"It was early morning as I waded through the low tide waters of the moorage, trying to decide a profitable, but not too strenuous way to spend the day. Eight months of anthropological fieldwork among the boat dwelling Badjau people of the southern Philippines were behind me, and I was just beginning to unravel some of the unknowns of Badjau culture. I saw my friend Laisiha, an old female shaman, sitting at the end of her houseboat, looking extremely tired and under the weather. Out of genuine concern for the old woman, I asked if she were feeling well.

"Not at all," she replied, as she spat a mouthful of betel juice into the water.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"The evil spirits. They are up to no good again."

"What have they been doing?"

"They have tricked my grandson into going to Borneo."

"Tricked him?" I asked.

"Yes," said the old woman, shifting her cud of betel. "He had been away for almost a month, and we did not know where he went. I asked the spirits where he was and they said they tricked him into sailing to Borneo. But I didn't believe the spirits." She went into a long discourse about the lying, trickery of the spirits and the danger of ever believing the things they say. "So I had to go to Borneo last night to see for myself."

"You went last night and are back now?"

I asked cautiously. The round trip to Borneo normally took at least a week by Badjau boat.

"Yes. That's why I'm so tired this morning."

"I see. How did you go?" I ventured.

"I flew," she said sharply, as if any fool would know that

"You flew? By yourself?"

"Yes. Flying always makes me tired, and it was even worse last night because I was flying into the wind."

"And how was your grandson?" I asked.

"He's well. He is working there, and will probably not be home for another month. I'm getting too old to do all this flying and running around. But people just won't leave me alone. They always want me to help. Sometimes I wish I weren't the best shaman in Tawi-Tawi. It's too tiresome."

I was to learn many more of Laisiha's fabulous experiences: trips to the bottom of the sea; journeys inside other person's bodies; visits to the invisible world, as well as her more mundane everyday conversations with the spirits. When I first heard of Laisiha's adventures, I thought that the sweet old woman must be either a charlatan or a bit over the edge of senility. But by the end of my stay in the Philippines, I came to believe that perhaps Laisiha and her fellow shamans were able to communicate with a realm that most of us never experience." (Nimmo 1975)



The babaylan coming
and going.

Sexless and impotent, the *manang bali* of the Sea Dyaks is an ecstatic shaman who dons the dress of a woman and engages in occupations proper to the fairer sex. Among the Ngadju Dyaks of southern Borneo there is the institution of the *balian*, a priestess-shamaness who indulges in prostitution, and the *basir*, the counterpart of the *manang bali*. These two, the *basir* and the *manang bali* are hermaphrodites. They even go so far as to take "husbands", mindless of the mockery of the village. Among the Baré Toradja in the Celebes we find the *tadu* or *bajasa*. They are usually women or men who pose as women. (*Bajasa* originally meant "deceiver.") Their particular technique, Eliade tells us, is "ecstatic journeys to the sky and the underworld, which the *bajasa* can perform either in spirit or in concreto" (Eliade 1966).

Worth noting in this regard are the following: first, the vocation to this state of life is believed to be a supernatural command that has been received three times in dreams. Eliade says "To refuse would be to seek death." second, the Ngadju Dyak is very clear on this: "no ecstasy is possible except to one called by the divinity"

The shaman may be a man, a woman, or a sexless, impotent man.



(Eliade 1966); third, the bisexuality and impotence of the *basir* arise from the fact that the priest shaman is regarded as the intermediary between the two cosmological planes — earth and sky — also from the fact that he combines in his person the feminine element (earth) and the masculine (sky). The hermaphroditism of the *basir* and the prostitution of the *balian* are both based on the "sacred value of the 'intermediary' on the need to abolish polarities." (Eliade 1966).

During the early 17th century, Alcina (1960) reported that there were native Visayan priests called *asogs* who were also hermaphrodites. They dressed in women's clothes and gave themselves over to womanly occupations. Unlike regular men, they did not wear loincloths nor had themselves tattooed. They wore long skirts. And they wove, rather than hunted or fished. Not a few of them had "husbands." Alcina, however, does not offer a religious explanation. Still it is evident that the *asog* symbolized the *coincidentia oppositorum* or union of opposites, a well-known archaic formula for the divine bi-unity.

Sample Rituals



All peoples have rituals. These are actions that follow a prescribed pattern and are believed to be highly efficacious. In them are dramatized the key beliefs of a people about the origins of the world, the meaning of life, the ideal behavior of a human being. Just like Christians, our animist ancestors, brothers and sisters have had their own revered rituals. Many rituals intervene at the different stages of the life-cycle: birth, courtship, marriage, and death. They seek health for the child, success for the suitor, fertility for the spouse, and a smooth journey to the next world. Other rituals heal the sick and the dying. There are also rituals for everyday purposes: success in fishing and hunting; clearing the land of heavy, dangerous trees; an abundant harvest; house-building; and victory over enemies.

In the sample ritual from Surigao, a household asks permission from the spirits to clear a part of the forest, lest they harm one of them by mistake or destroy their tree homes. The second ritual, from the Cordillera, attempts to bring back a soul that has wandered for too long outside the body, thus causing the owner affliction. The third, practised annually in Palawan, tries to avert disease by making offerings to spirits who ride a large cooking vat from across the wide sea. The use of cigarettes, biscuits, and glasses in these rituals tells us immediately that some influence from Christian neighbors has seeped in. But the basic patterns of the rituals — the use of special food to attract the invisibles — continue the past.



AYO-AYO

Ritual for clearing virgin land (Jamoyawons of Surigao del Norte)

Propitious Days: Wednesday or Friday when unseen beings are believed to roam the streets, fields and streams. This is the day the Jamoyawon stay home hence it is easy to inform them about the certain piece of land to be cleared.

Best hour: breakfast time, noon or six in the evening, when unseen beings are also supposed to be home, relaxed, eating breakfast, lunch or dinner.

Assembly of Provisions: It is the functionary's obligation to carefully inspect each item in the assembled provisions and paraphernalia — seeing to it that they are acceptable to the standard of the unseen beings — that is, that the tobacco is strong enough, the wine potent, the betelnut ripe. He must serve only the best since he knows that the unseen beings are very particular about their taste. Items of poor quality would merely reflect poor preparation and provide grounds for the rejection of the *ayo-ayo*.

The household members assist the beneficiary. The neighbors voice their individual opinions on the provisions, commenting on whether the pig is fat or thin, etc.

Invocation of the Proposal: On the day of the *ayo-ayo*, the beneficiary butchers the pig assisted by one of his sons. He sees to it that his wife who supervises the cooking does not put salt on the loins of the slaughtered pig. All the paraphernalia are packed in a basket and they begin the trip to the forest on foot.

The party includes the functionary and some family members (others must remain at home to take care of the feast later) and some neighbors. Complete silence is observed by the people remaining behind, and the group as they enter the forest land. Even footsteps are scarcely audible. The group must be careful not to touch any object — stone, twig or blade of grass. Even to point at an object is taboo. A mood of solemnity prevails as before a mysterious power.

The functionary selects a large tree or a huge rock on which to place the table or altar, and clears the shrubs and grasses at its base. Squatting before the table the functionary and the beneficiary bring out and arrange the following:

- unsalted, unspiced chunks of pork set on empty clam shells
- steamed rice on seven empty clam shells
- biscuits (from the sari-sari store)
- *mallorca*, a native wine, in two unopened bottles which will be poured into two bamboo “glasses”
- tobacco rolls; cigarettes
- betelnut congeries consisting of betel pepper leaves, tobacco, areca palm nuts and lime

*The spirits of the dead
crowd to the raft to
enjoy the smell of the
delicious offerings.*

A sweet smelling incense is placed in an empty coconut shell and ignited. As its smoke diffuses into the air the functionary shouts clearly:

"Hoy, friends in the caves, in the ground holes, on mounds, on trees, in groves, come here because I have presents for you. You come here now. Here, here is pork, here is rice. Here is good wine, I will pour for you, I will sample it first so that you will not say that it is dirty. Here, take this now.

I would like to request from you, if at all possible. I would like to propose that this land be used by (full name of the beneficiary) who is beside me. You grant that he breaks open this land. Supposing you agree, give signs so that we may know when we return on Friday. This is a proposal, so if at all possible, allow (full name of the beneficiary) to open this land. In case you grant this request, he will work on this land immediately. In case not, we will not force you. Here you eat some more, I will pour (more wine) for you. Here are biscuits. Here are rolled cigars. For those of you who do not smoke cigars, here are cigarettes purposely brought for you. Here is areca palm nut for chewing, here are lime and betel pepper leaves. (Pause for one hour).

Now, we will go because you are perhaps through. Now, we leave it to you to understand our poverty, for what can we do when that is all that we can provide? We will return on Friday at the same time so that we may know if you grant our request. If you do, give signs on the food. Thank you so much."

Once in the village the beneficiary invites the group to a lunch consisting of the same basic dishes as those in the *ayo-ayo* but this time with the pork salted and spiced.

Getting an Answer

The next Friday the beneficiary and some friends return to the forest in the same silent manner. Some may bring cutting tools. The functionary goes directly to the table to look for signs or marks of approval. If the clam shells on which the pork and rice were served are found inverted, the cigarette broken or the tobacco unrolled, the wine diminished or stale, the biscuits cracked, then the proposal has been approved. If however they have remained untouched then the beneficiary is advised to abandon the land. Untouched provisions mean that the unseen beings have not left the place because they find the proposal unattractive.

If the signs are favorable however, life begins to stir in the forest. The group starts to talk, look around, point. The beneficiary assumes a new role, that of landowner.

— Jesucita L. Sodusta (1983)

PADPAD and PAYPAY

Rituals for the return of a wandering soul (Kankanai, Bontok, Mountain Province)

Padpad

Menpadpad means "to wrench the soul of a sick person from the clutches of a spirit." In this case a woman is usually the practitioner: she works herself into a trance, stands up, covers her face with her hands, shakes all over, talks, moves about, dances and gesticulates with an invisible interlocutor. Then she seems to enter into a contest with a spirit who obsesses her: she speaks alternately in her own person and in that of the spirit, and wants to recover the soul of the patient who is being left by it.

The prayers recited usually tell a story related to the situation. If the patient suffers from kidney trouble or boils or eye infection or a protruding rectum one of the characters in the myth has the same problem. He goes to a specific god whom he can consult about his boil, sore eyes, retention of urine, or hemorrhoids who tells him what to do (usually to perform the sacrifice he is offering now).

In a prayer recited over cooked food, the younger of two brothers suffers from a protruding rectum and the older brother consults the spirit who resides in a piece of wood attached to a house beam.

When a bird appears in the vicinity of the ceremony a prayer (or story) is recited in which Lumawig tells his child to ask the bird, which appeared near his house, to consult the spirits about the matter.

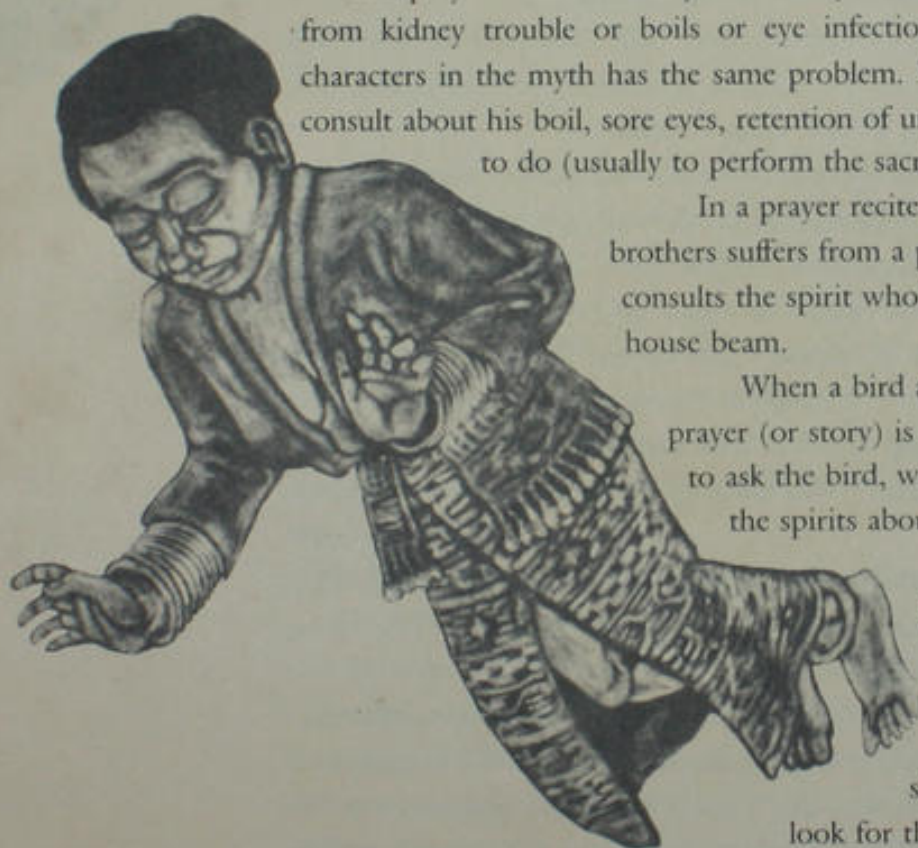
Both the *padpad* and the *paypay* are performed for the return of a wandering soul into the body of a sick person.

In the *padpad* they try to take it away from the spirit who caused the sickness; in the *paypay*, they go abroad to look for the wandering soul.

Paypay

The person who does the *menpaypay* takes a chicken under her arm, a winnowing basket in one hand and a stick in the other, and goes from place to place, in order to drive the soul of the sick person into the basket by means of the stick. She does not even shrink from entering other people's houses in order to look for the wandering soul.

This is the prayer she recites: *Paypay*, let us go home to the village/ as it is a warm place to dwell in/ confound this spirit's house where you are dwelling/ our house in the village is better/ as it is a warm place to dwell in.



Sometimes they pretend that it is a jar that has stolen the soul, for which this is the prayer: You, old men here/ here I talk to you/ if you cure my sickness here/ I shall put *tapey* (wine) in you/ as I have not fed you indeed.

When a parent has a child who is less than a year old, he (or she) recites a prayer at regular intervals in which he (or she) begs the soul of the child not to stay behind, not to remain in the place where he (or she) has been working. (This is a do-it-yourself *paypay*).

— Morice Vanoverbergh (1953, 1972)

RUNSAY

*Ritual offering of a ceremonial raft for protection from spirits of epidemic sickness.
(Tagbanuwas of Palawan)*

This dramatic ritual is held at night once a year, on the fourth day after the full moon of December, on the beach near the mouth of the Aborlan River.

Description of the *runsay* falling on December 25, 1950: By late afternoon the beach was already dotted with lean-to's and fires built as protection from the cold winds. The leader of the ritual related the origin of the *runsay* ceremony:

One day long ago Apu Pilas was walking on the beach when he saw eight men and one woman riding a large *kawa* (metal cooking vat) on the waves near the shore. They were *diwatas* who told him to give a message to the Tagbanuwas. That they should hold a *runsay* every year, preparing offerings of rice, wax, cigarettes, *liyutlut* and one chick. They gave their names (which translated) meant: "Among the Waves," "Riding with Sails," "Standing Gentleman," "Violinist" (Tagbanuwas have a native bamboo violin), "Floater on the Deep Waters," "Crossing as Far as You can See," "Walker on Waves." The female deity was also called "Violinist." That the Tagbanuwas should call on them every year or fall ill and die.

Each of the deities had three songs which they taught Pilas and his companions. They also showed them how to make the paraphernalia and perform the ritual. The *runsay* began at dusk and lasted until dawn. It had several phases:

First Phase: Building the *bangkaran*, a 12-foot ceremonial raft. Its body consisted of bamboo poles lashed side by side. Considerable effort was made to weave a beautiful sail from split nipa leaves. A cloth flag was tied to the "mast". A mat-like platform was also constructed for the offerings. The raft had two steering rudders to keep it on a straight course. Two upright poles were planted in the ground on either side of the raft which was still on the sand.

When the raft was completed at 10 P.M. representatives of each of the families making the offering laid liberal portions of two ritual foods: *liyutlut* (starch rice cooked in bamboo tubes) and fermented rice cakes (cooked, placed in a small wine jar with yeast and allowed to ferment 2-3 weeks).

Second Phase: *The Panawag:* spirits of the dead and the nine deities were called. The leader and his wife proceeded to the edge of the surf, just beyond the lapping waves. He





laid the leaves of the areca palm and arranged the offerings — rice, wax, *liyutlut*, *amik* (fried rice cakes) and a bowl containing betelnut chew. Squatting he picked up the bowl of betel ingredients and tapped it with his finger. Then he threw a pinch of rice into the air. Spirits of four dead men who were formerly leaders of the *runsay* appeared. They partook of the offerings and were requested to help call the nine deities to convince them that they should protect the Tagbanuwas from the spirits of epidemic sickness. A brief prayer concluded this phase.

Third Phase: The scene of this phase is the raft which is still resting high on the beach.

The leader squatted on the raft and censed the platform on which were piled the ritual foods. He picked up the bowl holding rice and held it towards the sky and the sea and prayed briefly. Then he lighted a candle on the platform. He picked up and tapped the bowl of betel ingredients and at the same time threw seven pinches of rice taken from the other bowl into the air. The nine deities were called to partake of the offerings.

At the termination of this brief ritual many women in the crowd surrounding the raft again piled more ritual food on the platform, completely covering it. Squatting before the pile of food the leader called the nine deities a second time.

This was the signal for the many children who had been edging towards the raft to dive into the mound of food, each trying to obtain and eat as much as possible. In a matter of minutes after this mad scramble the consecrated food had completely disappeared. The ritual food is said to protect children from sickness. For a moment it looked as if the raft would disintegrate but a number of men rushed to steady the raft and protect the sail. The surrounding crowd became boisterous, shouting encouragement and laughing.

A brief lull followed during which the raft was cleaned up and repaired.

Fourth Phase: The nine deities were again called: Women representing each participating family came forward with baskets containing more food — uncooked rice, cigarettes, areca nuts and betel leaves. The leader took from each one only the exact quantity of offerings required (determined by the number of members of the family). When all these individual offerings were piled and arranged on the platform, the leader tied a small chick to the platform and stuck candles on both sides.

Two men came forward and hoisted the raft over their heads. They walked out into the quiet waves until they were about 200 yards from the shore. They put the raft on the water. The crowd gathered on the edge of the surf to watch. The raft began to move briskly for the tide had turned and the wind was off shore. Within half an hour it had gotten dark. Excitement rustled through the crowd as the raft sailed away for it is considered an ominous sign if the raft should “be returned” to the beach.

— Robert B. Fox (1982)

SHARING WITH THE UNSEEN



Long ago a handsome man and his two dogs arrived at Dacalan. The Dacalan people did not know where the man and his dogs had come from. The people nudged each other because everywhere he went it glowed.

When the people grew tired of watching him, they said to each other, "Please ask him what his name is." When they asked him he said, "I am Kabuniyan, and I have come to see what people on earth are doing."

The following day he said, "I am going hunting." He called his dogs and went. At mid-morning, he arrived at the mountain called Binaratan. He sent his dogs off, and then sat down to listen for their barking.

After a while there came the sound of barking, as though the dogs were competing with each other. The barking was fading in and out, and he could hardly hear it because of the chattering of the birds who were eating fruit in the trees. Kabuniyan grew angry with the birds so he said, "All you birds stop chattering because I cannot hear the barking of my dogs."

The birds stopped, and it was like the silence following a heavy rain.

Later on Kabuniyan could hear the barking of his dogs at the brook down below. He went down, and when he drew near to the barking he crept up quietly. When he looked down at the deep pool, there were his dogs. They had surrounded a deer with a full set of antlers, which was swimming around in a circle in the deep pool.

As he drew near, he threw his spear. It hit the spot behind the deer's foreleg and went directly to the heart.

When the deer was dead, Kabuniyan got it and placed it upon two pieces of wood at the bank of the brook. He made a fire and singed the hairs of the deer. After singeing the hair, he gutted the animal. He took the heart and the liver and placed them on a skewer.

After the heart and liver were cooked, he performed the *awad* ceremony. "This is your share, you who are at Binaratan, you who are at Binuybuyugan, you who are at Gallasan and the other mountains," he called to the spirits. After finishing the *awad* ceremony, he ate the remaining part of the liver and heart. Then he placed the meat on a pole to carry home.

When it was dusk Kabuniyan arrived at Dacalan. He set down his meat. He chipped away the upper part of a wine jar and cooked his rice in it. After his rice was done, he cooked his meat and then he ate. He ate all his rice and meat because he was very hungry. After he finished eating, Kabuniyan slept because he was so tired. He slept soundly through the night and then it was morning.

Later on Kabuniyan told the people of Dacalan, "When you go hunting and you get some wild game, perform the *awad* ceremony for the spirits who own the wild game. Give a share to Kabuniyan too, so that he will know that you got some of the wild game."

"When you go hunting", Kabuniyan told the people, "give the spirits a share so that we will know that you got some of our game."





The Idols



What They Looked Like



"Since there are no temples," writes Miguel de Loarca in 1582 of the mountain districts of the Philippines "their (the natives') houses are filled with these wooden or stone idols which are called *tao-tao* or *likha*. There was one house that contained one hundred or two hundred of (them)." First circumnavigator of the world, Antonio

Pigafetta reports destroying many shrines by the seashore. "The idols were made of wood . . . were hollow and lacked the back parts. Their arms were wide open and their feet turned up under them with the legs open. They had a large face with four huge tusks like those of a wild boar and were painted all over." (B & R, XXXIII).

In prayer places or shrines, other chroniclers report, the natives kept idols made of black wood and baked clay, which they invoked in times of war. These idols they also kept in the innermost part of their houses and were interred with the dead who had worshipped them in life. Crude figures of wood or clay called *larauans* and representing their dead relatives were also found in the houses of the *timauas* or serfs. They have them as god of fruits of the earth. For this purpose they hold on occasion a drinking feast in the field under a covering in which they erect an altar and a wooden statue which they say is the god Lacanbaco with teeth and eyes of gold, the genitals gilded and of the size they want — it may be the spike of their rice — and the body is all hollow. Around it those who are offering the sacrifice eat and feast, and the priests . . . place in the mouth of the god Lacanbaco the food they eat and give him to drink the wine they have; and by saying some superstitious words they ascertain that he will give them very good and abundant fruits asked of him.



Pedro Chirino reports that in San Juan del Monte lived a *catalona* whose statue was said to possess supernatural powers . . . This statue was a great treasure. It was made of a large tooth of a *caiman* and completely set in gold. The head of the *anito* was also made of gold.

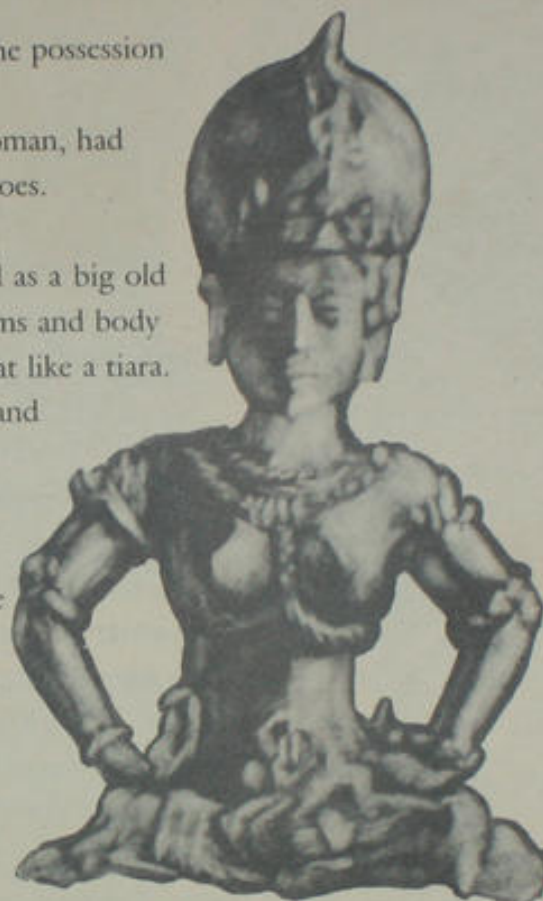
In Mindanao Chirino also saw many small platforms outside the houses on which were poorly carved wooden idols and in front of each idol an earthen brasier filled with live coals and aromatic herbs.

The Pavon manuscript lists the following idols in the possession of the *bailanes* or native shamans:

Jamolaon, a wooden idol in the shape of an old woman, had a hole in its head, without hands and its feet without toes. It possessed large misshapen eyes.

Sidapa, who keeps the tree of record was conceived as a big old man with an open mouth and only three teeth. His arms and body were large and his feet small. On his head was . . . a hat like a tiara. The statue was three palms high, made of baked clay and black wood.

Calag-calag were small clay figures on which were indicated what part of the body of the deceased had been afflicted. For one who died of a headache the cranium of the idol would be broken or pierced with a hole; if the victim had complained of chest pains the chest would be pierced, or as the case may be, the abdomen.



What Happened to Them

Since the purpose of colonization was the introduction of the new religion, the *likha* and *larauan* were outlawed by the missionaries, and practically obliterated from the face of the earth.

One *likha* was kidnapped, as in the following relation:

"Arriving at Linao (with some Christian natives of Butuan) and seeing its inhabitants were gentler and more docile, he (Fray Jacinto de San Fulgencio) erected an altar in a house he selected. There he placed statues in which the pagans expressed great satisfaction, praising their beauty. Then he preached a sermon to make them understand who the true god is and urged them to abandon the customs and rites of the devil. At first they ridiculed the proposal but afterwards they yielded, specially one who made known the location of their god or *diwata*.

"... He ordered a boat to be launched and went to look for the idol. Some indios went to meet him, brandishing their spears to prevent his entrance. Others, more humane tried to persuade him to abandon his undertaking, saying that if he wished to build a church there they would give him a place more to his purpose. The Father answered mildly that this house was very much to his purpose, because it was large and all could gather in it in order to be instructed in the mysteries of the faith.

"The Indios who accompanied the pious Father were afraid that a quarrel was about to take place, and with that fear they followed after him right up to the door. The Father entered the place of worship boldly, to the amazement of all. He saw various altars on which they sacrificed to the idol, which was placed on a higher altar covered with curtains. The Father was careful not to pay attention to the idol. When the *principales* had assembled, he addressed them concerning the erection of an altar to the true God. All agreed to this. As he was going out, the Father purposely turned his gaze to where the image was, and asked what that was which had so much reverence there. No one replied. Then the zealous Father seized the image, which was that of a fierce devil, made of wood and covered with a black varnish, which made it altogether ugly and frightful.

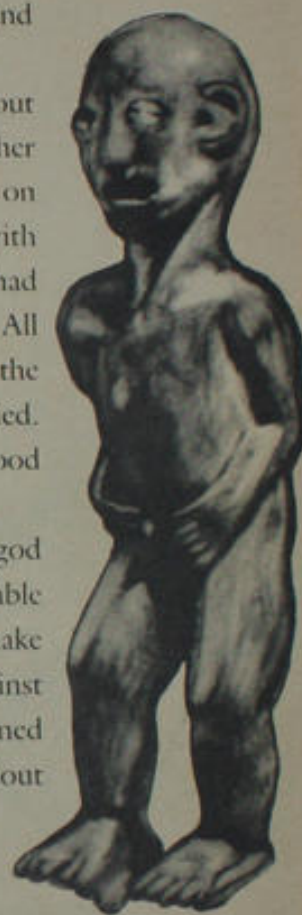
"The savages were as if thunderstruck, for they thought no one could touch their god without losing his life, and they could not cease marvelling that the Father had been able to capture their *divata*. Thereupon the fervent missionary took the occasion to make them understand their blindness, and to persuade them of the offense committed against the true God by worshipping the devil. After such a striking action he returned triumphant, with the protection of Heaven, to his boat, taking the idol with him, without anyone preventing him.

"The next day the Indios offered a considerable quantity of gold to ransom their petty god, but the Father paid no attention . . .

The Spaniards, it seemed, were here to stay. There was little point to resisting the new religion considering the massive power and determination of their missionaries . . .

"The new Christians themselves came to the Fathers saying, 'Although you pour on us the waters of baptism and teach us sound doctrine, this is all done in vain as long as we are full of the instruments and vessels with which we used to offer sacrifices to our idols. For they bring back to our memory these actions as they are the customs in which we were born and grew up. . . . Command then, fathers, that all should bring forth these articles, and take them from the possession of those who have them' . . . The fathers listened with great pleasure . . . but considering that those who kept the articles hidden and esteemed would not bring them forth, they told the *principales*: 'Do yourselves begin, and be sure that the crowd will follow you. If your example should not be enough it will be a pleasing service to God and good for the souls of your own people to make known who use or hide these things . . .'

"The *principales* were the first to bring forth the vessels of *quila* (wine from sugar



cane aged for some years). This wine they value very highly and keep with great care, and use it in honor of the idols in all their feasts. They also brought forth an abundance of earthenware, which was only used for their superstitions and a great heap of various kinds of instruments which, as if consecrated, were set aside for their idolatries and then only by the ministers of the idols. Everything was poured out or broken with the consent of the people (on this) very pleasing Shrove Tuesday, in Pangasinan, when they cast off from themselves the remains of idolatry, to the great confusion of the devil to whom all this had been dedicated."

But beliefs die hard. In 1595 in Lumbang Fray Diego del Villar (B & R, XLIII) brought to light the number of women and men still practising the office of *catalonan*, to discover the many rites still using an immense number of *likha* and *larauan*.

"The most important (idols) were about 200," the friar wrote. "Some were covered with gold; others with beaten silver and studded with diamonds and other precious stones with enchasing and filigree work. Almost all were of great price and value, and specially of great esteem among the priests and priestesses . . .

"The following day, as soon as it was light, he commanded a great bonfire to be built in the patio of the church, and ordered that all of the priests and priestesses should come there from the prison where they were by order of the *alcalde mayor*. In the sight of countless people he made the sacrifice by throwing all the evil race of gods into the fire. The religious did not move from the spot till they were consumed. And just in case something might have remained which the fire could not consume, he threw all the ashes into the river.

"Both these acts caused great sorrow to that wretched people who burst into tears on seeing their gods treated thus. That this might be fixed in their memories and be a warning to all, the *gobernadorcillo* himself ordered the flogging of the priestess in accordance with their customs . . . Afterwards a flogging was also given to two of the others, a man and a woman, who were the principal ones in that cursed office, like bishops, venerated and revered. Then they cut off the hair of all the *catalonan* and put on them certain signs by which they might be known for what they are. . . ."

This was not the end of the story. While a priest launched a tirade against those evil practices before the assembled congregation, the church door suddenly opened. In came the Father Provincial and two priests "half-naked, covered with ashes, lashing their bodies with cords, bathed with their own blood in penance for the transgression committed by the town. The whole multitude in the church started to shed abundant tears." One of the *catalonans*, said to be moved by the spirit of the new God, stood on a bench, wept copiously and confessed aloud her secret deeds. The rest of the congregation shed tears as well.

The process of Christianization must have been a terrible battle of wills. Some of the *catalonan* or *babaylan* believed in their deities as fiercely as the *padres* did in their God.

There was little point to resisting the new religion considering the massive power and determination of their missionaries.





The spiritual contest took a toll on Spaniard and native alike. One missionary in the Bisayas, famous for having destroyed numberless idols, shrines and sacred groves, turned stark raving mad just before boarding his homebound ship.

The Spanish chroniclers wrote about local religion, but of course, hardly in a scientific manner. Westerners began to study non-Christian religions systematically and sympathetically only with the advent of the social sciences in the 19th century. Meanwhile the idols were roundly condemned as works of the devil, the shamans ridiculed, and the strange rites made fun of. As in Europe, Christian priests villified healers — who officiated as well at pagan rites — as agents of the devil, as “witches.” The label has stuck. There was no attempt to put the beliefs in context, or to try to understand them. Three hundred and fifty years later, we are still trying to piece together our prehistoric religion. Luckily the indigenous religion of our brothers and sisters in the remote hinterlands gives us clues.

In the end the God of Love, of course, triumphed. John Leddy Phelan writes: “The proselytizing dream of Magellan came nearer reality when Humabon, the local cacique, was baptized amid a combination of Spanish and barbarian display of pomp, protocol and pageantry. Five hundred followers of Humabon were also received into the church on that Sunday. Friar Pedro de Valderrama was apparently persuaded not to make an issue of the polygamous habits of the Cebuanos. In any event he was spared the indignity of baptizing the men and their plural wives together.” (The ceremony for the men was performed in the morning, for the women in the late afternoon).

A similar clash must have taken place in Sulu and western Mindanao when Islam came in. The traditions of Sulu say that their ancestors used to worship stones, graves and celestial bodies (Abubakar 1983). For sure they must have had stone idols, as excavations in Mindanao attest. But the new faith had the same Judaic parent as Christianity: it could not allow strange gods before the one true God. It had smashed Hindu temples elsewhere in the continent. In its new island home it must have encouraged the recent converts to destroy their false gods.

The introduction of Christianity into the Philippines did bring improvements. It abolished slave-raiding, polygamy, headhunting, and the burial of live slaves and wives. Islam too wiped off headhunting and human sacrifice. But the new religions legitimized new forms of oppression. Though they had begun centuries earlier as visions of universal brotherhood, their leaders ended up justifying sharp differences in wealth and power. Before the Second Vatican Council of the 1960s, many Catholic priests said nothing about the morality of a family’s owning thousands of hectares of farmland amid a sea of misery. In centuries past the lords of Sulu launched expeditions all over Southeast Asia to catch strangers for work on their farms (Warren 1985). There is no record of Moslem religious leaders protesting this. New idols came in, needing in turn to be broken.

The original form of the myths and epics was song. A Spanish chronicler reports: "All their method of government and their religion is based on tradition and custom . . . They preserve these traditions in songs which they know by memory, having learned them as children by hearing them sung when rowing, when working, when rejoicing and celebrating and much more when weeping in mourning for their dead. In these . . . songs they tell of the fabled genealogies and deeds of their gods."

Why were the songs not written down? One reason is that not all lowland peoples had developed a native script. And where it was in use, as among the Tagalogs, the script was used for exchanging messages — such as love poems — certainly not for recording chronicles and lengthy oral traditions.

With the coming of Christianity the old religion was forced out of the native's memory. "Thank God," wrote Fray Valerio de Ledesma barely fifty years after the Spanish occupation, "All the river is now seeking baptism, and one hears nothing else but the chanting of the doctrine throughout the villages and in the houses, whether people are working, or rowing, or walking about . . ." (Schumacher 1979).



Survivals or Superstitions?

For Filipinos who retained the old, indigenous religion, spirits were either humanlike or former human beings who just happened to be invisible and more powerful. They peopled the surrounding environment and had to be appeased with food offerings. When ignored, they wrought havoc; when pleased, they gave wealth and health. Some spirits, however, thirsted for blood with or without propitiation. After death, all humans entered the spiritworld, but their destiny had nothing to do with moral merit gained in this world. Sin, as a wilful act of rebellion against the Almighty Spirit, was an alien concept. The local term, sala, covered a wide variety of offenses, whether intended or accidental, whether major or minor. The destiny of men and women depended rather on how much wealth they had gained. While all went to the same abode, those who were wealthy enjoyed higher status than those who were not. Worse still, those who had died poor were in danger of being punished by the higher spirits, for their living descendants found it difficult to make the expected and expensive food offerings. Over these rituals presided specialists called babaylan or katalonan. Often they were women, sometimes male transvestites. They mastered not only the rituals but also the myths, epics, healing skills, and other lore of their people. In brief, they were the soul of traditional Philippine religion.

Educated urbanites have varied attitudes towards the ways of their ancestors. The Christian who takes his faith seriously fears, distrusts, and condemns these beliefs and practices as works of the Devil. Thus some Protestant churches forbid their members from offering food to their deceased on the grounds of idolatry. Not so long ago, Catholic priests and nuns warned the faithful about going to folk healers because these were reputedly in league with Satan. Non-churchgoers have been as critical, though for different reasons. Priding themselves on their scientific spirit, they lambast colonialism for destroying the indigenous culture. And yet they scorn the ways of ordinary, not-so-educated Filipinos as "superstitious."

The old religion continues to thrive today though in various forms, for instance, in what is commonly called "superstition." When people make sense of the world around, they may turn to the dominant beliefs of their milieu, be these secular or religious. Or they may turn to other beliefs which may be fragments of an earlier religion. Such fragments are derided as "superstitions," although one can argue that any interpretation, religious or secular, that does not square with reality, is also a superstition. The old belief in numerous, vulnerable spirits surfaces when rural Christian Filipinos warn their children about wandering about at dusk or throwing water carelessly; they might bump or wet a passing spirit. Sleeping close to a wooden post is considered dangerous, for nature spirits may continue to dwell within. Food offerings are still being made to ancestral spirits in Ilocos and the uplands of Cavite. While Christian Filipinos may no longer revere the crocodile as an agent of the lord of the deep — and instead hunt it to extinction — many keep crocodile teeth as talismans that confer strength on the possessor. Though they may detest the snake as a symbol of the devil, provincial Filipinos consider it good luck to have a snake dwell somewhere in the depths of the roof or for it to accompany the birth of a child. While they may not believe that a giant crab causes tides and eclipses, they stick crab shells on the spikes of the kitchen rack, the banggera, to scare witches away.

The educated sneer at the masses for devouring comic book fantasies like that of a woman who gave birth to a snake child. Recently, the mass media made news of a Tarlaqueña who, after ten months of pregnancy, finally gave birth — to a fish half a meter long. The woman and her spouse had the “child” registered in the municipality and willed it a lifelong water tank. Is this escapism or is it not the old religion still vibrantly alive?

Sometimes it takes a foreign fad to stir up dormant beliefs. Much-travelled Filipinos, who regard themselves as the acme of sophistication, have discovered that quartz stones can heal affliction. They have picked up the belief from trips to the West Coast where shops specialize in the occult. But, there is a native basis for this belief. People in the provinces value quartz stones as powerful objects, being “splinters of the sun.”

Survivals from the pre-Christian past bloom in the most unexpected places, indeed in practices approved by the bishops. The dancing that accompanies many of our popular Catholic rituals — the Turumba, the Sinulog, the Ati-Atihan — continues the all-important quest for trancelike states. Were there warrior queens, like Princess Urduha, once upon a time? The evidence is dubious. But, for sure, women did dominate the religious rituals. When Catholicism came in, the rituals were taken over by the priests; the nuns, however, being more numerous than the men, have kept the Church’s administrative machinery moving and visible all over the islands. The cult of Mary continues to dominate the religious firmament, out of proportion to Mary’s role in Catholic theology; but quite in keeping with the earlier importance of creator goddesses. Significant too is the fact that a tree is associated with this great Queen in Ermita, Manaoag, and Antipolo. And transvestites still play a prominent role in religious cults, like that of the Sto. Niño.

Some organized cults among Christian Filipinos continue the old religion. The most eminent example are those of Mount Banahaw in Quezon. The many churches on the fabled mountain have Christian names and celebrate elaborate versions of the Catholic mass. But their theology centers around a pilgrimage from the base of the mountain to the crater of the peak. Along the way are stations, called pwesto, where Hail Marys are recited. The pwesto are really natural formations: boulders, waterfalls, pools of water, caves. It is believed that, after death, the soul journeys up the mountain following the pilgrimage path. It is better therefore to make the pilgrimage now, as a rehearsal, than after death when the soul might lose its way. Significantly enough, the crater is the final destination. For our ancestors, craters and caves were entrances to the underworld. Another influence of the old religion shows in the choice of cultic figures. Rizal, Bonifacio, and Mabini have been deified and are now worshipped; in the same manner the warriors of the past eventually became gods.

Understanding the ways of our ancestors will help our self-definition as a people. We may not agree with those ways, but we should carefully examine them, for they are alive in the minds and hearts of the majority of our brothers and sisters, indeed even in us who glory in being educated and modern. In a world where pluralism has become the norm, we should recognize that other roads, other alternatives, can be trodden.

Besides there is a lot to be learned from the old religion. There are practices that can be reinterpreted within our own context. Our ancestors took care not to destroy certain trees and animals because of their powerful spirits. The ecological movement has taught us to be careful, when using our environment, to respect non-human rights. Women's prominence in indigenous religion can inspire those seeking equal rights in male-dominated Christianity and Islam. Trances are no longer associated with oddballs, for modern psychology and biology admit the reality of experiences that transcend the boundaries of space-and-time. There are many roads to the divine. One of them has been traced by the babaylan.

While the old idols disappeared, the seers and healers of the old religion survived. Converted to the new faiths, they continued to practice the ancient ways in secret. They were villified for being "in commerce with the devil," but villagers sought them out because of their tested powers. And indeed they carried a tremendous amount of knowledge in their heads. They knew a wide variety of plants and animals and their healing purposes. They knew the myths, epics and tales which summed up the experience of their ancestors and provided a guide for everyday life. They presided over rituals that comforted their fellow members at crucial junctures in life. Such lore was transmitted orally. While claims about their powers seem to be fantasies, we have to be more open-minded, given the current research on extra-sensory perception.

Lyall Watson (1980), who has studied the biology of the unconscious, recalls an experience he had on a remote Indonesian island. He wanted to see the giant of all the sea turtles, the rare leatherback, particularly in its female form. After searching in vain, he mentioned his interest to the local seer who promised, "I will dream one for you." Almost a month later, the seer invited him to come to a sheltered corner within the reef where he worked the water for twenty minutes with his fingers. Shortly after, a huge female turtleneck surfaced from the distance. She swam straight towards the seer and nibbled at his fingers. And then she turned around and paddled to the open sea.

In the Philippines, the Jesuit psychologist, Jaime Bulatao (1984) attests to a case of diagnosed leukemia healed within a week; or to a four-year case of persistent allergic rhinitis in a 12-year-old boy, the son of a medical doctor, who was cured by female seers by squeezing calamansi juice into his nostril while saying a prayer. The seers had entered into trance states where they acquired genuine powers that science is only now beginning to understand.



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ABOUT THE BOOK

THIS IS THE FIRST IN *THE PHILIPPINE READER* SERIES ON THE TRADITIONAL CULTURE OF THE FILIPINOS. THE SOUL BOOK DEALS WITH THE PRE-HISPANIC RELIGION THAT BELIEVED IN A SKYWORLD, AN EARTHWORLD AND AN UNDERWORLD EACH OF WHICH WAS COMPOSED OF SEVERAL LAYERS. IN THIS "CONDOMINIUM" LIVED GODS AND GODDESSES, THE MOST POWERFUL OF WHOM COULD CREATE WORLDS AND PEOPLE, FLY, FALL IN LOVE WITH MORTALS, FIGHT WITHOUT END. WHAT WAS THE EARLY FILIPINOS' CONCEPT OF SIN? WHAT WAS THEIR VIEW OF FORGIVENESS? OF WEALTH AND SOCIAL PRESTIGE?

ANCIENT FOLK RELIGION IS THE KEY TO UNDERSTANDING OURSELVES. FOR IF WE TRAVEL BACK TO OUR BEGINNINGS AS A PEOPLE, BEFORE THE COMING OF ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY TO DISCOVER THE GODS WE THEN REVERED WE MAY FIND VERY DIFFERENT HEROES FROM THOSE WE HAVE TODAY. OUR ANCESTRAL GODS MAY YET REVEAL WHAT CONTINUES TO REMAIN TO US AN ENIGMA — OUR NATIONAL CHARACTER. *THE SOUL BOOK* IS A BASIC READER ON THE SUBJECT MADE ENCHANTING FOR YOUNG ADULTS. IT IS A DISTILLATION OF LARGELY INACCESSIBLE MATERIAL — RARE BOOKS ON RESERVE SHELVES, ESOTERIC JOURNALS, ANTHROPOLOGICAL FIELD REPORTS AND GRADUATE THESES BY SCHOLARS FROM BLAIR AND ROBERTSON TO CASAL.

INCIDENTALLY THE SERIES NOT ONLY HOPES FOR A DEEPENING OF THE INTELLECTUAL DIMENSION BUT ALSO A BROADENING OF ARTISTIC TASTE. THE SERIES WILL FEATURE ONE ARTIST PER VOLUME, EACH ONE WITH A DISTINCTIVE STYLE, SO THAT THESE ARE ARTBOOKS AS WELL.